BHIMA BHOI

His life and works



BHAGIRATHI NEPAK

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* **BHIMA BHOI**
  His life and works
  by
  Bhagirathi Nepak

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BHIMA BHOI : His life and works

INDEX

Part I -Photographs

Part II - Life of Bhima Bhoi

Part III - Bhima Bhoi's works

Appendix

PREFACE

Bhima Bhoi, an ardent follower and preacher of Satya Mahima Dharma, lived and died about hundred years back. Born and broughtup in illiterate parantage, his writings take us beyond human intellect and philosophy, being embedded in Upanishadic and Vedantic concepts. Though potrayed as sectarian, yet he will be ever remembered as a social and religious revolutionary in Orissa, simply because of his simple analysis of the psyche of man and his self, which needs no further elaborations.

The mutifarioius earlier writings on Bhima Bhoi, by Shri Bhagirathi Nepak, are not new to the readers and research scholars of Orissa. He has spent most of his life time, in field-work investigation, record-collection and publications on Bhima Bhoi, that remains a fact. As a scholar of enviable erudition, Sri Nepak has carved his own niche of fame and prosperity.

But the present manuscript in a challenging one, for the fact that, the author himself has also refuted some of his earlier view points and has given fount to his newer academic insights in the matter under investigation.

Hope this will give a new direction in the line of thinking to the furure generation and scholars in the field. •

(S. Patel)
Reader & Head.
P.G. Deptt. of Anthropology.
Khallikote Autonomous College,
Berhampur, Ganjam.

PART - I

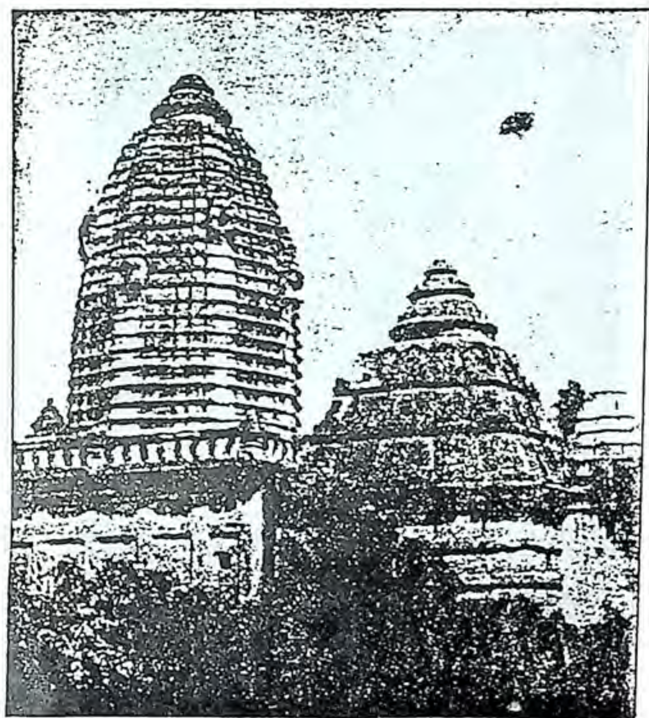
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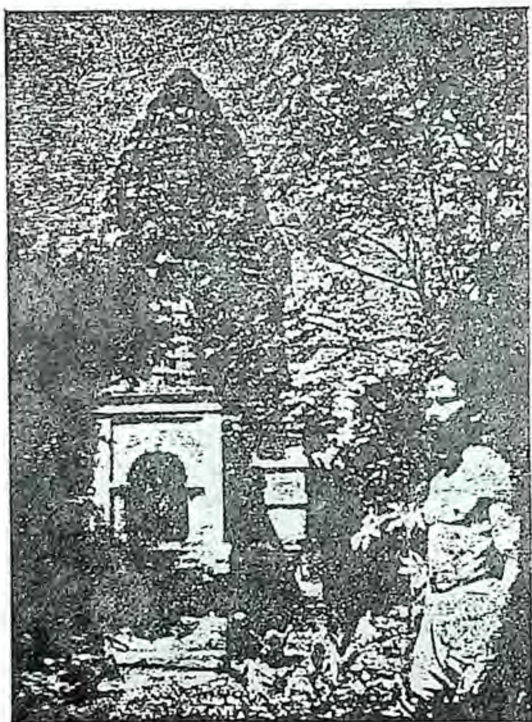
Saint Poet Bhima Bhoi

1850 AD
Baishakha Purnami

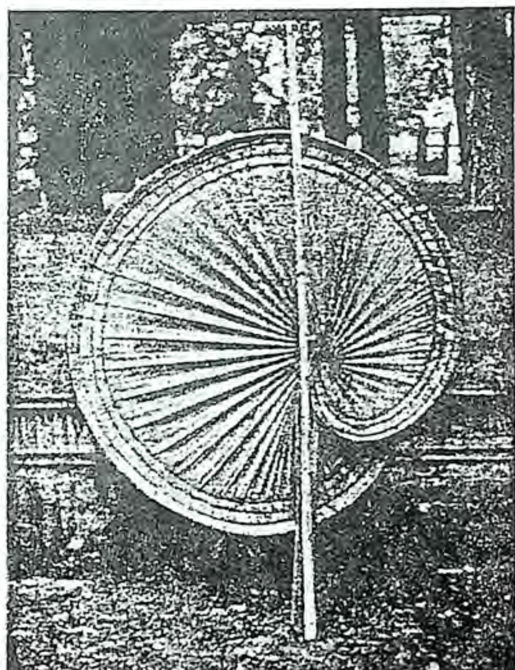
1895 AD
Shiva Chaturdashi



Bhima Bhoi's Samadhi Mandira
Khaliapali, Sonepur



SAMADHI MANDIRA
Khaliapali, Sonepur
୦
BISWAMITRA BABA



The Symbol of Bhima Bhoi's Mahima Cult



√ **Shrimati Shriya Mata**
Mahima Ashrama, Khaliapali

Artist's imaginary art for Bhima Bhoi









Upper Portion : (1) Bhima is grazing cattle
(2) Bhima Bhoi and Mahima Gosain

Lower Portion : (1) Bhima Bhoi engaged in writing
(2) Bhima Bhoi preaches Mahima Cult.



GADI MANDIRA
Joranda, Dhenkanal

PART - II

LIFE OF BHIMA BHOI

Background of Bhima Bhoi

In the beginning of nineteenth century, Hindu Society in Orissa had become decadent. Brahmins had become selfish and worldly. Their religious dogmas and ritualism had divided the people into numerous Sub-Castes, sects and groups. There were the high-borns and the low-borns. Untouchables were despised by higher castes.

Women were not considered equal with men in religious matters.

Devotion had become an object of outward display.

Vaishnavism and Shaivism had become rigid and full of mechanical rites and observances.

And people were introuble. They looked in vain for simple faith in God, BHAKTI, which could enrich their existence.

There arose at that time "BHIMA BHOI" affectionately called `BHIMA', who played a significant role to reform the society. He made an abiding contribition to the religious history of Orissa. He was a saint-poet and an ardent social reformer. His teachings and ideals have continued to exercise powerful influence on the people of Orissa and India at large till the present day.

Meeting with Mahima Gosain

At the age of sixteen, he had the good fortune of meeting "Mahima Gosain" a spiritual teacher and founder of the Mahima cult of Orissa. He taught him the Mahima faith and doctrines and asked him to propagate the cult.

Bhima Bhoi now saw the vision of his future life. He became an ardent devotee of his guru and took him to be the incarnatijon of the supreme. He resolved to dedicate his life to the worship of Brahma and service to man-kind.

In the word of Dr. Mayadhar Manshing", the story of the meeting of Bhima and Mahima Gosain and former development as a saint-poet clearly remind us of a similar meeting in the last century in the Kalitemple at Dakhineswar near calcutta, between the saint Ramkrishna and the young Narendra Nath Dutta with consequences of almost same charactor.

Life of Bhima Bhoi

The famous saint-poet Bhima Bhoi, the first and foremost missionary of Mahima cult was born of obscure parentage in the middle of the 19th Century. His followers usually refer to his miracular origin. But a discarded boy, who in later life came to be known as saint-poet Bhima Bhoi was found obscured in a palm grove outside the village "Jatasingha" by a Kandh couple Danara and Gurubari. The village `Jatasingha' is located in the Birmaharajpur sub-Division of the newly formed Subarnapur district. This village was a part of ex-Redhakhol State of Orissa in the past.

`Danara' the adopted father died shortly and the young Gurubari had to marry again the brother of her deceased husband as per custum privailing in the Kandha society.

The name of the brother of Danara was, as mentioned by Bhima Bhoi in his writings, "Dhaneswar". He was an agricultural labourer in the village "Kandhara" in Rairakhol subdivision of the present Sambalpur District.

Gurubari shifted to her new home at Kandhara with the boy Bhima when Dhaneswar went back to Kandhara after obverving the funeral rites of his elder brother Danara at Jatasingha.

At Kandhara Gurubari became mother of two children and then Bhima was subjected to step motherly treatment. The neglected boy suffered untold misery during his early childhood which he poignantly recollects in his master piece `Stuti Chintamani'. It contains copious auto biographical references.

Description of Childhood in "Stuti Chintamani"

`Stuti Chintamani' or `thought in prayer' is an outstanding composition of the poet Bhima Bhoi.

It is a collection of couplets. There are a hundred groups. Each group contains 20 couplets and is called a `Boli'.

Boli 20,21 and 22 have many Bio-data. Boli 21 starts with Bhima Bhoi's consciousness at the age of 2.

He met a wandering mendicant at the age of 4 in the month of Jyestha. From his description, this mendicant was obviously "Mahima Gosain" as he distinctly saw marks of `Sankha' and `Chakra' on his palms.

At the age of 7, he was in great distress on account of want of food.

At the age of 12, he was a grazier tending cattle in the forest and suffering for food and shelter. He was rebuked and thoroughly taken to task for any supposed fault.

At the age of 14, his misery was unbearable. It appears, as if he was thinking of ending his life.

When life became unbearable, the helpless boy left home at the tender age of 7 and began to earn living by begging.

It is said that, at the age of 12 he was employed as a cowherd tending cattle of "Chaitanya Pradhan", a rich Cultivator in the village " Kankanapada" and was Provided with a small cottage for living.

In "Stutichintamani", Bhima Bhoi has described his untold miseries as follows-

"My father left me deserted
After my Birth
Healthy and happy life how can I have
Even though I want .
In this way
eleven years of my life passed.
From the age of twelve
Time passed in the forest with Cattle. "

Legends on Bhima's birth

Many legends surround Bhima's birth and chilhood. His followers belive that Danara the adoptive father, once dreamt of a child floating on the village pond, being kept over the lotus. In the next morning the boy was brought by him from the said pond and reared up in his family. He is believed to be `Ajoni Sambhuta', i.e. one not born out of a mother. He appeared in the incarnation of a saint.

Surprisingly, Bhima Bhoi's birth was predicted long before in `Kalpa Sanhita' by Achyutananda in 15th century. It was mentioned that `Radha' (the consort of Krishna) will take birth in the world and will be called Bhima Bhoi. This has been mentioned in `Adisanhita' also, where it is said that `Radha' will be born as a `man' in a Kandha family and will live in poverty. He will have vast poetical talent.

But the legand and the mention of Bhima Bhoi in Achyutananda's writing bear no historical facts. The prediction mentioned in the Achutananada's writing seems to be a mear manipulation by some later poets.

So also, Shridhara Swami the follower of Mahima cult and a poet seems to be inclined to represent Bhima Bhoi as the incarnation of Radha because of his fervent devotion to Mahima Gosain. This topic has appeared in his book `Siddha Chandrika'.

But such an assertion is based on no valid reasons as there can be no logical relation between the attitude of devotion in the Mahima cult and the spirit of romantic love found in Vaishnavism.

The devotion of Bhima Bhoi is meditative and philosophic and is marked by intense human sympathy.

Bhima Bhoi as a grazier tending cattle, Misery and sufferings

In 22nd Boli of "Stuti Chintamani" Bhima Bhoi has described his miserable life as a cowherd. He says, "I roam in the forest every day with the cattle. When afflicted with intense hunger and thirst, I take water from the hill streams to save life - Looking at the sky, my mind reflects, it is not yet time and why should I get back ? For there would be no water, not even a morsel. And this life, why does not it

go in pieces, but suffers all the chastisements ! And yet I console and stabilize my heart turning away from all the abuses and tensions. It is not tears but blood that comes out from my eyes and I wipe it with my hands. Nobody else knows. It is only my Sriguru who knows all the miseries and when I recollect those times, my heart is rent with anguish. An arrow smites my heart and anger rages as a flame.

This is how may years from 12th to the fourteenth passed away. Only my mind knows what hardships, what anguishes have burnt me "

Again,

"I took at the emptiness and do not know how I will continue my life. Which branch shall I hold on to. How will I cross the river of suffering. I do not know. "

"TheGopa and the Madhupur of my mother's womb have not vanished from my mind. I recollect the little lessons I learnt there. In truth I will die, through truth I will save myself. Let this be ordained to me, so says Bhima Bhoi. All the good and bad deeds remain only in this sphere of death. "

(Translation by - S.K. Mohapatra.)

The Kachha well and Bhima Bhoi, the legendry tale.

Dr. N.K. Sahu in his article Bhima Bhoi (D.A.V. College, Koraput, Mahima Dharma & Darshan, 1972) states as follows :-

"At the age of 12 we find him (Bhima Bhoi) as a cowherd tending cattle of Chaitanya Pradhan, a rich cultivator in the village Kankanapada.

It is said that one evening he accidently fell into a Kachha well and remained there for long three days. These were the trying days for him and without thinking of any means of rescue he spent these days in deep meditation.

It was the close of the year 1862 and Mahima Gosain who was then passing through the village Kankanapada, found the blind devotee inside the well and rescued him from that dark pit.

Bhima Bhoi instantly got converted into Mahima faith which brought about transformation in him and in the pursuit of his life. "

But this incident does not fnd a place in the writings of Bhima Bhoi. Bhim Bhoi was not converted into Mahima faith after he was rescued from well by Mahima Gosain.

Bhim Bhoi himself has described in the first chapter of `Nirveda Sadhana' that he was initiated by Mahima Gosain while he was in his cottage.

Bhim Bhoi, a born poet

Bhim Bhoi was leading a lonely and desolate life. Whenever he was getting opportunity, he took to oral compositions and was used to singing them at this period of life.

Bhima Bhoi, no doubt, had a talent for poetry and a command over the local tradition and the ridiom and language of the local people. He used to unpose local Dalkhai, Halia, Sajani, Bauli, Karma, Jaiphula, Rasarkeli and Danda Songs at his leisure. Many poems of "Chautisa Madha Chakra" were written by him when he was leading a lonely life.

This was a spark of a thunder. He real thunder was seen after his conversion to Mahima Cult.

Local people were quite aware of the poetic talents of Bhima Bhoi. They were approching him to write songs for them to be sung in local functions. The local singers were praising him for his sweet, medodious compositions. Thus Bhima Bhoi had earned name and fame as a local poet.

In `Chautisa `Madhu Chakra' we find a series of songs under the Caption "Jaiphula" and "Rasarkeli" where Rasalila of Radha and Krishna is the theme. They have a racy of folk-idiom and contain un inhibited description of physical enjoyment. In these poems Radha's craving for Krishna is delineated through intense desire for union with all its intimate details.

The "Jaiphula" and "Rasarkeli" songs of Bhima Bhoi are considered to be the best folk songs of western Orissa and are being used now also by the folk singers.

Mahima Gosain, Govinda baba and Bhima Bhoi

Mahima Gosain attained Siddhi or final realisation in 1862 at Kapilas hills of Dhenkanal. There after he started out his missionary tour for spreading the messeage of Mahima Dharma among the people.

From Kapilas he came to a village named "Balasingha" near Baudh where he had established his Vaishnaba Ashram or Math in the first phase of his life i.e. before 1826 A.D. He had asked his disciple Jagannath Das to take care of his matha in his absense.

In the year 1862 A.D. when he wanted to establish his new religious faith, i.e. Mahima cult, he came to Balasingha Math and discipled, Jagannath Das. A new name 'Govinda Das' was given to him by Mahima Gosain after he was converted to Mamiha cult.

This Govinda Baba became one of the strong believer of the Mahima gospel and one of the closest associate of Mahima Gosain. He is recognised as the first "Siddha" of Mahima Dharma.

The meeting between Mahima Gosain and Govinda Baba is considered to be a great event in the history of Mahima religion.

After this meeting the Mahima faith got organised into a popular movement.

Govinda Baba was a great organiser during his time. In a few years, Mahima Gosain and Govinda Baba succeeded in having many disciples from different parts of Orissa.

Although Mahima cult was gaining popularity among people, it had no prescribed rules and regulations and mode of worship. Mahima Gosain and Govinda Baba went round the people from door to door with a clarion call to adopt the Mahima way to make themselves great and worthy. The people were coming to them and were sitting around them. They were hearing mindfully the teaching offered to them. Then they were being initiated in a non formal system of Prayer called "Brahma Sharana and Darshana".

The masses in the country covering all castes and communicaties were refering to 'Guru Anjan' niyama nistha' for regulating their conduct and house hold practices.

Mahima Gosain and Govinda baba both felt seriously that there should be some one to note down the rules and regulations of Mahima cult. So they were in search of such an able man.

In course of their missionary tour, Mahima Gosain and Govinda Baba came to Rairakhol ex-shate where they heard of Bhima Bhoi, the Kandha poet. They came to meet Bhim Bhoi in a small village called kankanapada.

It was the year 1866 and Bhima Bhoi, at that time, was 16 yeas old. By the age of sixteen Bhima Bhoi had already gained reputation as a local poet.

Legend has it that Mahima Gosain and his Disciple Govinda Baba came to Bhima's residence at Kankanapada in mid-night and called him out. Bhima was surprised and wanted to know who they were. He was told that because of his good deeds of his previous birth both of them had come to bless him.

Bhima said, "if you have come to bless me, let me be able to see you". And then he could see. He came out and saw the two Yogis standing outside the house like "Sun and Moon. " etc.

But Bhima Bhoi has narrated this incident in the first chapter of his `Nirveda Sadhan' as follows ".

Pravu Mahima Gosain with his disciple Govinda Baba came to many house in the mid-night and called me. I woke up immediately and found by my side the sunya Brahma. When I wiped my eyes and looked again there they were. The guru and the disciple. I feel prostrate at their feet and they blessed me.

Mahima Gosain asked me to write "Nirbeda Sadhana" and the history of Guru (Mahima Gosain) and Shisya (Govinda Baba)."

The blindness of Bhima as described in the foregoing legend is not true. It can be argued that the use of the word `saw' is metaphorical and not physical. In other wards, as stated by Sri S.K. Mohapatra in his book `Bhima Bhoi', this was merely a vision, the dawn of a kind of spiritual awareness which lifted the cloud of un-knowing. May be this is what that made him (Bhima Bhoi) a saint.

Bhima Bhoi discipled by Mahima Gosain

In the year 1866 AD Mahima Gosain met Bhim Bhoi in his residence at Kankana Pada, a village in ex-Reirakhol state, and discipled him and asked him to write about Mahima cult. He also made the un-sophisticated Kandha boy conscious of his great poetic powers and inspired him to compose and sing songs in praise of the Divine.

This brought about a spiritual transformation in the life of Bhima Bhoi who now started composing a series of Bhajans of exquisite beauty and great charm. He became a spokesman of Mahima cult and a propagater too.

Bhima Bhoi discontinued writing folk songs and devoted himself in writing Bhajana, Janana, Stuti etc relating to Mahima cult.

No doubt, Bhima Bhoi had a talent for poeting before his conversion to Mahima cult. The conversion led him to an even greater range of ideas and themes and helped extend the horizons of his poetic vision and composition.

Bhima Bhoi in the ex-state of Rairakhol

Bhima Bhoi was initiated by Mahima Gosain, the founder of Mahima cult in the year 1866. At that time he was in the ex-state of Rairakhol and was only 16 years old.

He was in Rairakhol ex-state for 26 years, i.e. from the year 1850 to 1876 A.D.

Mahima Gosain died in the year 1976 A.D.

Bhima Bhoi went to Joranda from Rairakhol to attend the funeral rites of Mahima Gosain and also the 'Mahima Maha Sava' held there. Not being satisfied with the deliberation of the council (Mahima Sava) he returned to Khaliapali and established a monastery after his own idealism. At that time Bhima Bhoi was a young man of 26 years old.

What was he doing in Rairakhol ex-state ?

As per orders of his Guru Mahima Gosain, Bhima Bhoi was busy in writing Mahima Bhajanas and propagating the new faith.

The poet prophet spent the best part of his life wandering from place to place, preaching his nonidoltrous and monotheistic cult to all and sundry and bravey facing insults, discomforts and tyrannies like early christian evangelists. But at times he seems to have lost patience with the slow pace at which his "true religion" making headway. Overwhelmed with the pervasive paganism all around, he burstout in many bhajans, like the Hebrew prophets, in rightous in dinagtion, says he in one of the Bhajans.

"Thesetyrannies shall end. The time is not far off when the great master will break the ego of these tyrans. He will get things done in such subtle ways that the sinners will disappear one by one without the others being even aware of it. They are immersed in such sins and immoralities and also involved in hypocrisies that no religion can save them in any way. Some of those sinners will be burnt in fire, some will be drowned in water and some will be just drop off and die. Some will be stung to death by serpents and others will meet death with halters round their necks. Still others will suffer from unknown diseases, their bodies shaking with pulsy, and those that survive will be lacking in vitality.

(Translation by - Dr. M. Manisingh)

In his time Mahima Dharma was persecuted. He was abused as a Kiristan - a Christian. He was severely chastised for repeating 'Alekh'. He was abused as a 'pathan' and chased away. He was boycotted. He complains, "If I am persecuted where I go, where shall I preach?" He says, "I have not finished yet. I have lots to say about worldly life. How much shall I write with Lekhan (stylo) and leaf ? It has become a potha ".

"At the age of Sixteen I composed poems"

Bhima Bhoi started composing songs of Mahima and Mahima cult at the age of Sixteen while he was staying in Rairakhol ex-state. He has described in his composition as follows "

"I was illiterate from my birth
At the age of Sixteen I composed poems.
I know nothing about Vedas, Scriptures etc.

My Guru prompts me from my heart.
My Guru gives me the knowledge
And I compose stanzas.
Without Guru's prompting and command
I know nothing". (Adi Anta Gita, Ch. 8)

Again he says-

"My poetical powers are due to Shri Guru
I am an youth without any intelligence
I have composed by Guru's command.
By my-self
I am incapable to say anything." (Adi Anta Gita, Ch. I)

Like many other Oriya poets before him (Sarala Das being the most notable) Bhima Bhoi always credited his poetic inspirations and insights to the grace of the lord and was full of gratitude for this. He always made it out that what ever lord dictated through his voice that was all he wrote. In him we thus find the traditional Oriya poet's sense of humility and belief in divine grace as the source of all creativity.

Appeal to Mahima Gosain

In the first few chapters of Stuti Chintamani (Chapter 1 to 15) and else where Bhima Bhoi has mainly described Mahima Gosain, Mahanitya Bhumi, Mahima cult etc.

Extracts from the 15th Boli as translated by S.K. Mahapatra are reproduced below :-

" From the immovable to the movable, from insects to birds, where ever I look, I find you in habiting all the beings. One can not consider any one small or big. It is said, you are near to those who call you with love. You are invisible to those who have no love and that you are ever subservient to the bhakta's love, Why then you do not listen to my supplications O' Lord? Why are you angry with me? Have I given up my devotion to you and got enmessed in other things? What all sins have I committed while worshipping your divine feet? You purnish me and appear as if you do not listen to my supplication. You drive me away from your side negative your own compassion.

For ever I crave and pine for you.

My hopes are many. I am anguished and miserable through numerous births. And in this age I am un prepared for receiving the siddhis and the grace.

Through what yoga should I move ? Through which path should I worship ? I do not have that true knowledge. I am no seer, no religious person, I am no pundit. But I am your guest. You may decorate me, you may annihilate me. The enemies are around. In my heart, in my soul, I only realise that the lord is my strength. You are the lord and you are the subject of all action and still every thing goes in vain for me ! you have given the life and yet you do not give a few morsels in the mouth. What justice is this ?"

Extracts of 27th Boli of Stutichintamani

" Weal and woe, salvation and suffering, these twins are your creation. Who can carry the burden of the sins ? Let them stay at your feet. There you have risen and why dont you realise that I cannot run away any where. Earning all the sins I will only put them in a basket and place it at your feet.

Seeking shelter in you, all the bhaktas are rolling on the earth. Forgive them the sins and O Guru bring them up.

Who can see it and to lorate ?

Let my soul be condemned to hell but let the universe be redeemed "

Bhajan

While staying in the ex-state of Rairakhol', Bhima Bhoi had composed many of his Bhajans. In fact, his life as a poet of Mahima cult began with Bhajans. `Stuti Chintamani' is a later creation of Bhima Bhoi and it was written by him at `Khaliapali Ashram' after 1876 AD. We find recollections of his past life, autobiography and many other things relating to Mahima Gosain, Mahima cult, his propagatijon of the new faith, rules and regulation relating to the Gruhi (Ashrias) Seers etc. in stuti Chintamani.

Shri Sitakanta Mahapatra rightly pointed out in his book `Bhima Bhoi' (P/45) as follows :-

"An important point to realise is that Bhima Bhoi was never conscious that he was a writer; nor he had any strong desire to engage himself in writing for its own sake or to earn fame as a writer. Spreading the inner message of Mahima Dharma was one of the major objectives of his writing. This is why in his writings we find a strong element of his personal life and its struggles, the inspiration he derived from his Guru, the dream - like quality of the soul's dialogue with the "Infinite" in the full range of its anquish and ecstasy and all these expressed in a style and language which are easily understood by the man in the street.

The Major achievement of Bhima Bhoi consists in expressing difficult Upanisadic ideas in simple, lyrical and unadorned language and style."

According to Mahima cult, Mahima Gosain is himself Anakara, Nirguna Param Brahma. Bhima Bhoi's bhajans and his stutichintamani pay eloquent evidence to the Parama Brahma revealing Himself in Mahima.

It is said that, Bhima Bhoi used to sing his bhajans daily in the morning and the evening and his four disciples, i.e. Haripanda, Basudev Panda, Dharmananda and Markanda used to take them down.

The Bhajanas of Bhima Bhoi reveal an ardent sincerity and religious passion that is extremely appealing. They have also an anguish which is personal and at the same time universal.

Describing "Param Brahman" and "Alekha patana pura" Bhima Bhoi writers.

- "He revels in the temple of the void
  The one without shape and form
  No, you can never see his two feet
  but do submit to the one.

- His house is in that nameless unknown realm
  O' wisemen remember, there
  Neither it is too warm, nor too cold.

- The untasted, unseen and unnamable nectar
  Has non equal to it in sweetness and relish
  The wisemen keep on wandering at his deceptive gait
  Fleeting as the twinkle of an eye
  And sharper than lightning.

- Whoever is lucky to visualise him in Silence
  Crosses the ocean of birth and death
  And finally merges into the undivided Brahma

- All you actions, the Karma are of no avail
  But the company of santly persons help
  If you accept the tenet of desirelessness
  And meditate on its single letter
  Where the Brahma reigns
  There is no rising, no setting
  And so speaks the hapless Bhima
  That darkness is truly impenetrable
  (Bhajana no. 7 (`Sunya Mandire Vihara')
  of Bhajnamala, part I, translated by Sri S.K. Mohapatra)

The Poet's taunts against the idolatry of the Hindu society is expressed in many a bhajan. Thus he says in one of them --

"It is in sheer ignorance that people worship idols icons, offering cakes, sweets and puddings and appealing to them for protection. They do not realise the simple fact that those are mere figures, without souls. How can they grant them their wishes ? People do not whorship Him who created them but run to status of wood and metal and say, "save us - save us". How unthinking is this approach of living human beings to dead ideals ! And how strange that he who created humanity out of nothing is so cleanly forgotten. "

In `Stuti Chintamani' Bhima Bhoi says-
"I do not worship the Gods and Goddesses
Nor the earthen and stone idol
I meditate on you alone in all earnestness
Seeking salvation of my soul. "

Bhim Bhoi had to face in numberable difficulties and humiliations while propagating the new Mahima faith. Orthodox hindus revolted against him and reported the matter to then king of Rairakhol. He was punished by the king and was driven out from his state.

Death of Mahima Gosain

The Death of Mahima Gosain in 1876 AD. gave a great shock to Bhima Bhoi who used to look upon him as the anthropomorphic form of Sunya Brahma. He, however, consoled himself with the thought that the incarnation of Mahima Gosain in the world and his subsequent disappearance could be possible only by His own will.

Bhima Bhoi went to Joranda from Rairakhol to attend the council that was summoned at Joranda immediately after the death of Mahima Gosain for consolidation of the Mahima cult. But not being satisfied with the deliveration of the council he made up his mind to organise a monastic institute after his own idealism.

It is possible that while returning from Joranda he met Arnapurna, sister of Bhima Das, a disciple of Mahima Gosain at Madhi in Dhenkanal ex-state and asked her to join him somewhere in sonepur ex-state.

It may be stated that, the young Bhima Bhoi fell in love with the beautiful young girl Arnapurna while he was on his way to the `Dhuni Ghara' organised at Madhi earlier.

Annapurna was the sister of Bhima Das, a resident of Madhi. He reported the matter to Mahima Gosain and Mahima Gosain not only denied to offer him `Vekabana' but also debarred him to attend `Dhuni Ghara' there after. He had advised Bhima Bhoi to marry Annapurna and lead a life `Gruhastha Bhakta' or Ashrita",

Bhima Bhoi in the ex-state of Sonepur

From Joranda, Bhima Bhoi came to ex-Sonepur State and Started preaching Mahima Dharma which was based after his own idealism. While Bhima Bhoi was stationed at `Gulunda', a village near Binka of present Subarnapur district, `Annapurna' left her house and family members and came out alone to join Bhima Bhoi at `Gulunda Ashrama'. Bhima Bhoi admitted her into his Ashrama and introduced her as `Ma Arnapurna' to his disciples, stayed there as the spiritual consort of Bhima Bhoi.

Having come to understand that Annapurna has joined Bhima Bhoi at Gulunda, Bhima Das, the the elder brother of Annapurna

came to Gulunda with some people and created an ugly scene there. They assulted Bhima Bhoi physically, burnt Gulunda Ashrama and rebuked Bhima Bhoi saying that he (Bhima Bhoi) has seduced his sister to become a nun of Mahima Dharma, deviating from the principles preached by Guru Mahima Gosain. Bhima Das also compelled his sister to go back with him.

Bhim Bhoi kept mum and did not take any action against Bhima Das. Annapurna refused to go back to her village with his brother. Hence Bhima Das returned dissappointed and reported the matter to his fellow brothers at Joranda and also Mahima Gosain.

From Gulunda, Bhima Bhoi came to Khaliapali with Annapurna and his followers and decided to make that picturesque village the seat of his religious activities. One Bagarti, the head of the village was glad to allow the monastery to be built in his village. Afterwards Niladhar Singh, the king of Sonepur state also approved Bagarti's decission and granted some land.

Khaliapali Ashram was started in the year 1877 A.D. i.e. after the death of Mahima Gosain, the founder of Mahima cult.

Bhima Bhoi in Khaliapali Ashrama

Bhima Bhoi did not lead the life of a recluse at Khaliapali Ashrama. His monastery was a seat of experiment for achieving the synthesis between life spiritual and life temporal.

Annapurna, it is said, was his spiritual consort and was living a life of austerity and moral purity. She was a great spiritual force in the Ashram.

Beside Annapurna, there were four other consorts of Bhima Bhoi, two of whom were regarded as his spiritual saktis and the other two as his worldly companions.

Where as Joranda became the centre of a strictly organised monastic order which accepted no woman, but admitted them only as layman (Ashrita) of the sect, a rather different trend developed in Khaliapali. Bhima Bhoi lived there with five "female companions", three spiritual and two worldly and with four scribes whom he used to dictate his poems simultaneously. The names of the scribes are Haripanda, Basudev Panda, Dharmananda & Markanda.

The Scrribes

Hari Panda and Basudev Panda where two brothers. They were residents of 'Top - Banahar ' village under Atabira Police station, in newly formed Bargarh District. Both the brothers belonged to orthodox hindhu family and were well conversent in Vedas.

Being influenced by the preaching of Bhima Bhoi, it is said, both the brothers had torn up the sacred thread and joined Bhima Bhoi. Till death, they did not leave Bhima Bhoi's Ashrama.

Dharmananda & Markanda

They came from "Khajur Tikra" a small village in ex-Sonapur State. They belong to Baishnaba Caste of Hindu Society.

The Five consorts

The names and where about of the five Consorts are furnished belows :-

1. Annapurna : She was called a spiritual consort of Bhima Bhoi. She was sister of Bhima Das, a disciple of Mahima Cult (Balkala Panthi) & of Madhi (New Kamakshya Nagar), Dhenkanal. She was from a Baishnaba family and not Brahmin.
2. Rohine : She was daughter of Narayan Das, Balangir.
3. Sumedha : She is the doughter of Baba Mohan Das of village 'Bhursapali' near Lachhipur and Khaliapali.
4. Saraswati : She was the only daughters of Baba Eswar Das of Rampela village, ex-Sambalpur District, Now Submerged in Hirakud Dam.
5. Subarna : Where about not known.

In the year 1888, Bhima Bhoi begot on these two wordly companions, i.e., Sumedha and Subarna one daughter and a son. They were named "Labanyabati" and "Kapileswar" respectively. Labanyabati was the daughter of Subarna and Kapileswar was the

son of Sumedha. The daughter labanyabati was two months older than the son Kapileswar. The inmates of the Ashram used to address them affectionately as `Nuni' and `Babu' respectively.

Raid on the Jagannath Temple : 1880

By the year 1880 AD. Khaliapali Ashrama of Bhima Bhoi became most important centre of Mahima Dharma. Bhima Bhoi converted large number of people to his Mahima cult.

Mahima Gosain died in the year 1876 AD. After his death, there took place a serious quarrel among the followers of Mahima Dharma at Joranda leading to violence and bloodshed. During the life time of Mahima Gosain, the Kumbhipatiyas and Kanapatiyas were not considered as different sects. After Mahima Gosain's death they were divided into two different sects.

Baba Banamali Singh, Manager of Dhenkanal state writes in para 7 of his letter no 40 Dt. 81.10.1881 addressed to the then supdt. of the Tributary Mahals as follows.

" Atlast the founder of the religion who was believed to be over existent died and the Tungis together with gods which they contained were sold and most of the followers, finding that the Mahima Gosain was no better than an Ordinary man, disbelieved what he had taught and came back to the Hindu religion..."

Banki Tahasildar in the last para of his letter no 131 dt. 6.8.1881 addressed to the then commissioner disclosed as follows :-

"There are now no Kumbhipatias or Kanapatias in Bhanki. They are mostly in the central provinces. There are a few Ashritas in Banki but they do not now openly and firmly profess the religion. They have almost lost their faith in it and have kept up some forms of it as they have not the moral courage to relinquish it entirely and returne to their former religion. In fact they never learnt or understood what it really was but adopted it and had blind faith in if in ignorance being misled by the show of extraordinary qualities which they took to be super human and divine in Mahima Gosain.

the religion has thus almost died out in Banki "

Such was the condition of Mahima Dharma in costal belt of Orissa after the death of Mahima Gosain. But it was spreading rapidly in the western part of Orissa included in the Central province at that time. A large number of people of various castes and creeds including some fanatics used to assemble in Khaliapali Ashram to listen to Bhima Bhoi.

When the name of Khaliapali Ashram was at the peck, a large number of fanatics marched from Sambalpur area to Puri to raid the Jagannath Temple. The incident took place on 1st March 1881 AD. A case was tried, the Judgement of which is now in the Board of Revenue at Cuttack. Some ill-informed writers have mentioned that Bhima Bhoi had taken active part in the raid on Jagannath Temple.

It appears that, there was a procession of socalled Kumbhipatiyas led by 12 men and 3 women all shouting "Victory to Alekh". The story goes that, they came to the temple gate, broke open the doors of the Bhoga Mandap and entered the hall of Jagannath. The Jaya Vijaya gate was shut against them and so they rushed to find some other entrance.

The Pandas offered vigorous resistance and one raider fell down and died in the scuffle that followed.

According to historian B.C. Mazumdar, the raiders derived their inspiration for the attack on Jagannath worship from Bhima Bhoi.

This allegation, however, is not supported by any official document. Mr. C.E. Buckland who describes the episode in his `Bengal under the lieutenant Governor's make no reference to Bhima Bhoi.

Sri N.N. Basu on the other hand, has held that Bhima had given a call for a Congregation of the believers of Alekh cult to converge at Puri as he had heard a divine voice predicting that Mahima Cult would lead to the exposition of the hidden Buddha - image of Lord Jagannath etc. But his statement is not based upon facts.

After the raid a case was tried. It is seen from the Judgement that Bhima Bhoi was not an accused. There is nothing to show that neither he recruted the fanatics nor accompanied them. One `Dasa Ram' seems to be the leader of the raiders as mentioned in the court Judgement.

Imprisonment of Bhima Bhoi, 1891

Those who follow the Mahima Philosophy and are followers of Bhima Bhoi are generally known as Kumbhipatias or Alekhas. The name " Kumbhipatia" is derived from a rope of the bark of "Kumbhi" tree which they wear around their waists.

The Alekhas or Kumbhipatias are strongly apposed to idolatry. They worship the formless god whom they call "Alekha". They believe in the existence of 33 crores of Hindu Gods and goddesses but do not care for them as they regard them as mere servants of Alekh. The initiated followers are not permitted to have a "Tulasi" plant at home, a plant that is dedicated to "Vishnu" and in normally found in every hindu household. The regid caste system in the Hindu Society is considered as one of the greatest evil. The Alekh followers discard Brahminism, hindu rites, Tirtha, Brata casteism etc.

The followers of Bhima Bhoi took him (Bhima Bhoi) to be the incarnation of God and began to worship him. Brahmins like Haripanda and Basudev Panda also joined the other disciples. In the occasion of Maghamela at Khaliapali, both Annapurna and Bhima Bhoi were seated on a throne and were offered Dhupa, Dipa etc. The disciples from all over Orissa and outside presented them valuable articles.

At this, the orthodox hindus became annoyed and complained before "Dinabandhu Dewn" that Bhima Bhoi has crossed all limitations, poisoned Hindu religion with anti-propaganda and seducing the ladies of respectable families to become nuns of his so called Mahima faith.

At that time, Raja Niladhar Singh was the ruling Chief of ex-sonepur state.

Dr. B.C. Mazumdar in his Book "Sonepur in the Sambalpur Tract " has recorded that, "Raja Niladhar Singh entertained very liberal ideas in respect of religious and social matter. He rather helped Bhima Bhoi and his followers in establishing their principal seat at Khaliapali.

But from 1887 to 1891 AD Raja Niladhar Singh did not take much interest in the administration of the State as the Dewan, Dinabandhu Patnaik was employed by the British Government for state administration. He did not even care to raise any word of objection against the deeds of the Dewan. He observed strict

reticence over the whole affair and no one could know what led him to be indiferent to the state affairs. Hence the whole state was ruled by the then Dewan Dinabandhu Patnaik without the interference of the Raja Niladhar Singh.

Dewan Dinabandhu Patnaik was an orthodox hindu. The complain made by orthodox hindu brahmins gave sufficient grounds for the Dewan to proceed to Khaliapali with police force and arrest Bhima Bhoi and other ashramities like Hari Panda and Basudev Panda. They were put to custody at "Dil Biharpur forest" of Sonepur and were humilated and physically assaulted in 1891 AD. They were even threatened to be burnt with the logs of lord Jagannath's car. But prince Prataprudra Dev came to their rescue. Bhima Bhoi was set free. He returned to Khaliapali Ashram with his followers safely and spent his last days peacefully.

Bhima Bhoi had to face considerable opposition not only from the Brahmins among whom he could recruit large number of his followers but also from the Balkaladhari sect of Mahima cult, Joranda.

The Balkala dharis declared that, Bhima Bhoi had founded his own Matha after his own idealism and deviated from the principles preached by Mahima Gosain. They, therefore, do not consider Bhima Bhoi and his followers as true Mahimaitis

Bhima Bhoi, the poet prophet spent best part of his life wandering from place to place preaching his monotheistic cult and bravely facing insults, discomforts, and tyrannies like early christian evangelists.

In this connection it may be mentioned that, Mahima Dharma made its appearance in the middle of 19th century. After the conquest of Orissa by the British in 1803, the christian missionaries made headway in preaching the Christianity in the Hindu Society. Many people mistook Mahima Dharma as Christianity, because it had certain similarity with that of Christian religion. Bhima Bhoi has mentioned this fact in his 'Stuti Chintanami' saying, "People are scolding us Christian. To utter "Alekha", they say, we will die one day. Why shall we accept Christianity? None will carry us, nor will cremate us. We will become moth".

Since Mahima Dharma has some similarity with that of Christian Philosophy and appeared at a time, when the latter was in the process of organisation, it is but natural for the people to wrongly identify it with the Christian religion.

But it should be remembered that, the Mahima movement stood as a barrier to the spread of Christianity in general and particularly among-the uneducated rural folk of Orissa.

The Christian missionaries white preaching their religious Philosophy to the depressed class people of Orissa realised the importance of Mahima Philosophy and did not confront to it.

Mahima cult became popular and appealing day by day due to preaching of Bhima Bhoi through his sentimental compositions. He was undoubtedly a prolific composer of devotional Songs.

Last phase of his life

Latter in life, Bhima Bhoi, the poet prophet probably became tied of wandering place to place. By that time he had already acquired name and fame as a saint-poet. The last phase of his life, in contrast to his childhood and youth, is supposed to have been full, of honour and amenities. He has mentioned in his "Stuti Chintamani "-

> " Listen O' learned men to my strange story. You are blaming me without knowing the past, the present and the future. It was in my fate that I should have wealth, wife and son. I am enjoying the fruits of my previous deeds. What does it matter to any body else ?"

Bhima Bhoi breathed his last in 1895 when he was hardly 45 years of age.

Bhima Bhoi's female consorts survived for some years after the death of Bhima Bhoi and passed away one after another during the first quarter of the 20th century.

Son Kapileswar and daughter lavanyabati led the life of austerity and aloofness till their death sometimes in 1935-36. Samadhi Mandira was constructed in honour of each member of this divine family, but Bhima Bhoi and Annapurna have been given samadhi in the same temple, the highest and the noblest of all in that remote village Khaliapali.

It is said that the Samadhi Mandira of Khaliapali was constructed by Panda Brothers, i.e. Hari Panda and Basudev Panda at a cost of 35 thousand rupees at that time.

More about Bhima Bhoi

It is revealed from personal enquiry and observation-cum-interview in Khaliapali village on 20.9.1972 by Sri Prafulla Behera, Revenue (Gazetters) Department, Orissa that Bhima Bhoi was a foster child of a Kandha couple called Danara and Gurubari who belonged to the village Jatasingha under Birmaharajpur Police Station of Present Subarnapur District.

Bhima Bhoi was born in the year 1850 on Baishakha Purnami. He was not illiterate and read a little in his childhood. He was remarkably intelligent with a memory that surprised all his friends and elders. The stories he heard from `Purana Panda" and others were accurately retold and recited by him.

Bhima Bhoi was of medium statured and his complexion was fair.

He was quite strong and stout and never suffered from any communicable diseases.

Bhima Bhoi was never blind. He was able to do his normal duties till death.

While he was staying at Khaliapals Ashram, he had kept some scribes with him. They were Hari Panda, Basudev Panda, Jairam Das, Muralidhar Das, Mohan Das, Dharmananda Das, Markanda Das,

Ananda Das, Sridhara Das. Among them Hari Panda and Basudev Panda were very intimately associated with him.

Generally palm leaves were used for writing the religious verse. Bhima Bhoi was also writing himself on palm leaves. He used to confine himself within the premises of Khaliapali Ashram while he was engaged in writing. Non was allowed to enter into Ashrama without the prior permission of Bhima Bhoi.

On the full moon day of Magha, i.e. Magha Purnima (January - February) Bhima Bhoi used to come out of the Ashram and appeared before his devotees and public in General.

Bhima Bhoi was in the habit of using wooden Sandal, the evidence of which is found till to-day in the Ashram. "Kathau Mandir" has been constructed recently and the Kathau (Wooden Sandal) of Bhima Bhoi is being worshipped by the disciples.

Samadhi Mandiras of Basudev Panda, Hari Panda, Sumedha Debi (mother of Kapileswar), Saraswati, Kapileswar and Labanyabati (son and daughter of Bhima Bhoi) are also found to-day within the Ashram premises.

Bhima Bhoi, the poet prophet was a fine singer and could captivate the attention of the audience while singing Bhajan playing on a Khanjani. He had handsome appearance.

He had a clearn heart, an open mind, a liberal spirit, a wider outlook and a tender sympathy in him.

Bhima Bhoi breathed his last in 1895, on the day Shiva Chaturdashi.

After Bhima Bhoi, Annapurna took over the entire charge of Khaliapali Ashram and managed it nicely for some years. After Annapurna, Kapileswar, the son, being deaf and dumb, Labanyabati, daughter of Bhima Bhoi and Rahini, was managing the Ashrama till her death. She did some improvement works of the Ashrama.

After Labanyabati, Samadhi temples were constructed by the Ashramities in honour of each member of this divine family. Bhima Bhoi and Annapurna were given samadhi side by side in the same temple, the highest and noblest of all in the remote village Khaliapala.

At present (1998) the Samadhi Mandira of Bhima Bhoi is being managed by the Endoment department, Government of Orissa.

List of Published works of Bhima Bhoi

A list of books written by Bhima Bhoi and published so far is given below :-

1. Stuti Chintamani
2. Sruti Nisedha Gita
3. Astaka Bihari Gita
4. Bhajana Mala, part I & II
5. Brahma Nirupana Gita
6. Nirbeda Sadhana
7. Adi Anta Gita
8. Bangala Atha Bhajana
9. Chautisha Mala

In addition to above list, the following disputed books stated to have been written by Bhima Bhoi have also been published.

10. Padma Kalpa
11. Brahma Chalaka
12. Manu Sabha Mandala



Part - III

BHIMA BHOI'S WORKS

Stuti Chintamani

" Stuti Chintamani" is the most important and major poetical work of Bhima Bhoi. It is a collection of hundred bolis.

`Boli' is a technical term in Oriya. It means a stanza or a cento. Each boli consists of 20 stanzas of 2 lines each. Thus "Stuti Chintamani is a collection of 2000 stanzas or 4000 lines.

It contains some autobiographical, personal and confessional verse of Bhima Bhoi and also a description of the degeneration of social values. It ends with a panegyric to the Alekh cult and an exhortation to suffering humanity to seek the grace of the Alekha and His Mahima.

Biodata of the Peot

Bolis 20,21 and 22 have many biodata of the poet. Boli 21 starts with Bhima Bhoi's consciousness at the age of 2. He met a wandering mendicant at the age of 4 in the month of Jyestha. From his description, it is evident that this mendicant was obviously Mahima Gosain, as he distinctly saw marks of "Shankha" and "Chakra" on his "Palms". At the age of 7, he was in great distress on account of want of food. At the age of 12 he was a grazier tending cattle in the forest and starved the whole day. He was thoroughly taken to task for any supposed fault. At the age of 14 his misery was unbearable. It appears as if he was thinking of ending his life. He was aware that he was an orphan and he remembers that he had read a little in his child hood.

There is not a single word in any of his writings saying that he was blind. While he has gone into such detail, would he not have referred to his blindness, if he had been really blind ?

Dr. Arta Ballav Mahanty and others draw their conclusion about Bhima Bhoi's blindness from references in books written by devotees

of Mahima Dharma and others. Dr. K.C. Panigrahi's explanation is that, the blindness was spiritual which was removed by his Guru Mahima Gosain.

Bhima Bhoi spent his early days in Poverty, but there is sufficient evidence in his own writings that he was well of towards the end of his life in contrast to his childhood and youth. It was full of honour and amenities.

In 63rd Boli he says, "Listen O' learned men to my strange story. You are blaming me without knowing the past, the present and the future. It was in my fate that I should have wealth, wife and son. I am enjoying the fruits of my previous deeds. What does it matter to anybody else ?"

Besides autobiographical verse, "Stuti Chintamani" contains personal and confessional verse and also a description of the degenration of social values.

In his prefece to Stuti Chintamani, professor Artaballava Mohanty went to the extent of comparing Bhima Bhoi to Jesus Christ. He was of the opinion that just as Jesus Christ suffered crucification for the suffering humanity, Bhima's soul was ever on the cross suffering all the agony and all the anguish of a troubled soul seeking a better and purer life for himself and a better future for the whole of humanity.

Dr. Mayadhar Mansingh refers to Bhima Bhoi's psalms, hymns, prayers and prophecies as extempore compositions and says, 'Though expressed in the colloquial, unpolished speech of the illiterate mass, they lift the audience to a high stratum where one breathes the air of purity, holiness and unadulterated truth. They are not denominational, though the poet was the very mouth-piece of the Alekh cult. Truely inspired poet that he was, Bhima's out pourings are not the dogmatic propaganda of a sectarian tenet, but a telling record of his own souls, his own spiritual agonies and his own vision. Their universal appeal comes out of the deep personal passions of a genius.

Here, for instance, are lines which unashamedly express his sense of utter frustration, bringing to mind similar word of Jesus

Christ on the cross. "Oh my lord, why donot you help me? For preachng your glory my own reputation is broken to pieces. For preaching you as the unknown one, they taunt me as a Christian and put me to untold suffering. Though covered with sin, they denounce me if I talk to them the religion of truth. They shout, "Drive him away, drive away." Let us see how his master protects him. He is a d-n sinner, refuse him food or shelter." And when I preach of equality, they retaliate by treating me like a dog. My lord, this is my fate where ever I go. I feel I should henceforth stop going about. In the face of these tyrannies where shall I go?"

Bhima Bhoi was aware of the tyrannies that afflicted human life; tyrannies both social and metaphysical. The former were of men against men, of a group against another. In his own life he had faced insults, humilation and hostility as he continued his travels and preached monotheism and attacked idolatry. He was a rebel against prevailing social and ethical values in every sense of the term. His taunts against idolatry of the Hindus is expressed as below in 95th Boli of stuti Chintamani.

"It is sheer ignorance that people worship idols icons, offering cakes, sweets and puddings and appealing to them for protection. They do not realise the simple fact that those are merely figures, without souls. How can they grant them their wishes ? People donot worship him who created them but run to statues of wood and metal and say, "save us, save us". How unthinking is this approach of living human beings to dead indols. And how strange that He who created humanity out of nothing is so clear forgotten !

(Translation - Dr. M. Mansingh)

In this connecton, it may be stated that, Mahima Dharma and Christianity appeared almost simultaneously in Orissa to heal the human suffering. Like Mahima Dharma, devotion is the main essence of Christianity and the preachers of this religion are called `Messiah' or the songs of God. Both the faiths acted miraculously to the people of depressed class who were looked down upon by the high caste Hindus. Under the circumstances, the two religions appealed first to the tribals living in the inaccessible parts of the Gadjat areas. Both cults are against the worship of Gods and Goddesses. We find the echo of Bhima Bhoi's voice in Jewish scriptures as follows:-

"Thou shalt have no other Gods before me, Thou shall not make unto thee any graven images, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven of above or that is in the earth beneath or that is in the water under the earth"

Jewish Scriptures - EX, XX, 3

" Thus saith the Lord, the heaven is my throne, and the earth is my food-stool. Where is the house that we build unto me and where is the place of my seat ? He who resignes himself to him. The greatest of all, heteaches also his creatures to know him as the greatest yacua."

Jewish Scriptures

"Bhima Bhoi, the poet prophet spent the best part of his life wandering from place to place preaching his non idoltrous and monotheistic cult to all and sundry and bravely facing insults, discomforts and tyrannies like early christian evangelists. But at times, he seems to have lost patience with the slow space at which his " true religion" was making headway. Overwhelmed with the pervasive paganism allround, he burst out like the Hebrew prophets.

"These tyrannies shall end. The time is not far off when the great Master will break the ego of these tyrans. He will get things done in such subtle ways that the sinners will disappear one by one without the others being even aware of it. They are immersed in such sins and immoralities and so involved in hypocrisis that no religion can save them in any way. Some of those sinners will be burnt in fire, some will be drowned in water and some will just drop off and die. Some will be stung to death by serpents and others will meet death with halters round their necks. Still others will suffer from un known diseases, their bodies shaking with palsy, and those that survive will be lacking in vitality."

(Translation by Dr. M. Mansingh)

The cosmological vision of Bhima Bhoi very strongly brings to our mind the famous creation hymn of the Rig-Veda. In 78th Boli of Stuti Chintamani he says -

"The earth, rocks, air and water did not exist then. Only the great pervasive void overspread the soundless existence. Neither the myriad stars nor the sun nor the moon existed. Day and night were one. There was neither Heaven nor Earth nor Hell nor any of the Trinity. Not one of the Three hundred and Thirty three million gods was there, nor even sound. Nor any of the five elements. Listen, wise men, therefore, how things originated. And carefully store the information in your mind"

(Translation by Dr. M. Mansingh)

In the Indian context 'sin' is primarily supposed to be of two types - the inherited and the acquired. The former is the result of one's actions in previous births and, therefore, the individual soul has no means of running away from it or controlling it. The latter is the result of one's action in this birth. While, therefore, one could keep away from the later by devotionally ordained action based upon self - discipline, the former can only be removed with the grace of God. This is why, even though aware of the cleansing powers of bhakti, Bhima also emphasised the role of selfless devoted action.

Allied to his idea of selfless devoted action were also the twin concepts of surrender and ultimate sacrifice.

Sri Sitakanta Mahapatro has translated the extracts from the 27th Boli of "Stuti Chintamani" as follows -

" Weal and woe, salvation and suffering, these twins are your creation. Who can carry the burden of sins? Let them stay at your feet. There you have risen and why don't you realise that I can not run away anywhere ? Earning all the sins I will only put them in a basket and place it at your feet. Seeking shelter in you all the bhaktas are rolling on the earth. Forgive them the sins and O' Guru bring them up.

Boundless is the anguish and misery of the living. Who can see it and tolerate ? Let my soul be condemned to hell but let the universe be redeemed ."

Like Sarala Das of Oriya Mahabharat fame, who credited all his creativity and inspiration to Goddess Sarala, Bhima Bhoi attributed his writings to divine inspiration and not to his own talent. This proves his loyality to his Guru Mahima Gosain.

A perusal of his major work "Stuti Chintamani" makes one feel the intensity of his passion to cleanse the self from all sins and to bring about a social order based upon true religiousity.

In various Bolis of Stuti Chintamani, the poet delineates the spiritual condition in which it is possible to achieve genuine devotion for the Param Brahma. A total detachment and a deep craving like that of a child characterised his attitude and approch to life. He expressed the agony and ecstasies of life and the dawn of divine grace in soul - stirring poetry. Carrying to his hearts context, Bhima Composes -

"I do not know if through deep meditation and intellect one can see the vision of the Almighty Guru. But I do see him and then forget what to tell him when I see him ."

In these lines, says Sri S.K. Mahapatra in his book `Bhima Bhai'. (1/31) Bhima not only establishes by implication the superiority of Bhakti (devotion) over gyana (intellect) but also seeks to establish a spiritual and emotional condition through which the devotee attains a vision of the Supreme Reality or Alekh Niranjan. The twin aspects of his quest for salvation and the attainment of a higher order of existence are inextricably linked to each other.

There is a sense of personal anquish at one's predicament. A realisation that through repeated self-examination and self-purification the individual psyche can make itself a receptacle for the Brahman, runs through his writings.

The quest for individual purification, for self-control and self-abnegation also occasionally leads to a spirit of despondeny and even anger, when the goal still seems to remain distant and unrealised, when all attempts at self-abnegation do not bear fruit and the individual ego again seeks to predominate, when the world around appears to be sinking more and more into guilt and sin, there is passion and anger. On such occasions Bhima raises his voice against his individual self and also against society. Along with this search for personal purity he has a vision of a new life for humanity and a burning desire to lift it out of its present degeneration. For this purpose he is prepared to secrifice everything including his own self.

More than half of the prayers in stuti Chintamani give out the opposition and obstacles Bhima Bhoi had to face in the society including insult and humiliation. He has addressed Mahima Swami to lift him up from the situation. The intensity of feeling with which he expresses his mind is terrible and most touching. It rends the heart. The hoot-hoots and the ridicules he had to swallow are so intensely described that, one wonders, if there could be any better expression. The recollects his past laments, weeps, reaffirms his devotion, surrenders to Him, rebukes the miscreants and the teasers, curses them, predicts dire consequences and a dismal future, incites Him to respond and indespair at times has rebuked Him that He is a snob. Then he repents, lest he has not been able to recognise Him yet and pathetically implores to showhim the path. Inspite of all oppositions, obstructions and obstacles he was able to achieve success and in the last part of his life he seems contented with whatever was achieved and feels happy.

The style of Bhima Bhoi is unique and his own, and it is very difficult to give a proper rendering.

When the Natjonal Academy of letters (Sahitya Academy) asked for a line or couplet from each of the fourteen Indian languages, symbolic of its total ethos or representing a fine sense of humanitarianism, Oriya writers chose those two soul-stirring lines of Bhima Bhoi from the twenty-seventh Boli of his `Stuti Chintamani' -

"Mo Jibani pacche Narke padithau

Jagata Uddhara heu."

"Let my soul be condemned to hell

But let the Universe be redeemed."

This is the sum and substance of Bhima Bhoi's philosophy and the gist of "Stuti Chintamani".

Bhajanamala

"Bhajanamala" literary means the collection of prayers.

The prayers are discribed by Vaishnav poets to be primarily of three types. These three types or aspects may be described as below

(i) Prayers where the thrust is to make known one's miseries to the lord, to communicate to him one's anguish.

(ii) Prayers which sing about the Lord's supreme powers and his capacity to grant deliverance &

(iii) Prayers which are in the nature of supplications for granting the minimum objectives desired by the devotee.

All the three aspects are found in the Bhajanamala of Bhima Bhoi.

The prayers numbering 312 included in the Bhajanamala are remarkable for Lucidity, exposition of his ideas and sentiment. They are perfect pieces of music meant to be sung. The substance is, in fact, immersed in the feeling and tone and the musical content of the prayers becomes more impressive.

In most of the lyrical prayers Bhima Bhoi gives out many incidents of his life, about his sadhana and also a good account of Mahima Dharma and Guru Mahima Gosain. What ever may be the theme of the prayer, the perfect flow in the piece of the composition, the fluidity, the intensity of feeling, the sincerity of the tone and his imotion are full of impact.

The same can also be said of the prayers in the `Stuti Chintamani', but the abundance of lyrical element is found some what more in Bhajana mala than in the other compositions.

Bhima Bhoi's prayer songs in lucid and simple language which attracted the mass so deeply, made him so great in the history of Oriya literature. He occupies an unique place in the literary field of Orissa.

Mahima cult could not have been so popular and appealing without Bhima Bhoi's preaching through his prayer songs.

Mahima Dharma is not a separate religion like Jainism and Buddhism. It is intended to reform the existing religious practices

and beliefs of the Hindus. But people quickly mistook them to be either Christians or Buddhists. But the Mahimites are Hindus is evident from the literature of Bhima Bhoi. Bhima Bhoi's bhajans are the main sources from which we come to know about Mahima Dharma. Bhima Bhoi wrote genuine devotional lyrics, pulsating with reverence for the "Alekha parambrahma" and at the same time expressing Mahima attitude towards life. In his lyrics the great poet tries to blend devotion and thought together in one whole. The songs are expressed in such noble and dignified langguage that it touches the heart of any body who sings them.

It is evident from the bhajans of Bhima Bhoi that the Mahimaites also, like Hindus, believe in Karma phala, rebirth, transmigration of soul, avatarabad etc which are peculier to Hinduism.

The bhajans of Bhima Bhoi are sung not only by Mahima followers but also by other religious sects as they contain common religious feelings for all sects and religions.

It is said that Bhima Bhoi used to compose four prayer songs or bhajans in one "raga" at a time. He would first give out the refrain line of each of these four to the four scribes and then sing each of the bhajans.

Bhima used to recite his bhajans daily after morning bath and worship seated under a tree. Four of his disciples, namely, Hari Panda, Basudev Panda, Dharmananda and Markanda, used to take down his composition on palm leaf with iron stylo. From his Bhajanamala it is apparent that they were composed in groups of four. In his bhajana "EKA RAGE BANDHILI MU DI JODA GITA" he says-

"In one raga I composed four songs
I am the hapless Bhima
But my guru is all powerful
Under his fearless banner I have taken shelter
And drink the nector from his feet.
With his grace I see the inner and outer reality
With the eyes of Kknowledge. "

The Bhajans are in different ragas and Chhandas.

Bhima Bhoi composed his Bhajans primarily for the propagation of Mahima cult. During his life time non of the manuscripts were published. Because he never cared to get his writings preserved and published. It is said that Bhima used to send the bhajans to be sung before Mahima Gosain. Thereafter (disciples) bhaktas used to take it over and sing in groups with tambour. The first bhajana is said to have been sung in 1865-66 at khuntani near Athgarh.

Bhima Bhoi's poetry lacks technical competance of Upendra Bhanja. We donot find the detailed natural description of Radhanath Roy in Bhima Bhoi's compostion. But his poetry shares the lyricism and musical quality associated with the poets like Gopalkrishna, Banamali and Kabi Surjya Baladev Ratha though in a some what different way. Bhima Bhoi's poetry is a peculiar combination of the unique and the universal, the social and the personal.

Sri. S.K. Mohapatro rightly points out that Bhima Bhoi's poetry springs from an urge to seek both personal salvation and the redemption of man in society from a cruel destiny. His poetry is a peculiar combination of the unique and the universal, the social and personal.

His poetry shares the intense and passionate outpouring of Dinakrushna, the stark simplicity and clarity of Jagannath Das's Bhagabata and the vision and the sense of shared destiny we find in the Sarala Mohabharata.

the major achievement of Bhima Bhoi consists in expressing difficult Upanishadic ideas in simple, lyrical and unadorned language and style. The result is that even to-day these simple Bhajanas are the heart-throb of millions and every evening they are sung with the help of Khanjani in the villages of Orissa.

His poems show his excellence in putting accross difficult metaphysical concepts and ideas in simple and easily understood language.

"It was in Bhima's poetic utterances that the dry philosophical ideas and concepts of Mahima cult found their way to the hearts of millions in Orissa and outside this state through an out burst of lyric

energy. The community prayers offered by the bhaktas (followers) of Mahima Dharma and even those who are not formally believers in the cult use the large repertoire of Bhima's songs, Jananas and bhajanas.

Even now in the remote villages of Orissa as the evening descends, at Bhagabat Tungi's or community houses, among the bhajans recited are those of Bhima Bhoi to the accompaniment of Khanjani. To participate in one such group prayers is indeed a spiritual and poetic experience. One is transported to the spiritual realm where the void and eternity blend with the small environments of time and space, where personal misfortunes and tragedies blend with the universal orchestra of a higher order of reality." says sir Sri S.K. Mohapatra in his book `Bhima Bhoi'.

Dr. N.K. Sahu says, "The Bhajana songs of the Bhima Bhoi like those of mirabai, Tulsidas, Tukaram and Kabir are of great spiritual and literary value and they are marked by deep human interest and philosophic beauty. The poet emphasises through them the transcendental and all absorbing power of "Mahima" who is the only refuge for this distressed world. He asks all of us to dedicate and surrender with profound devotion and faith of the unqualified Brahma and advises us to control the senses, to practise liberality and charity and to be compassionate towards all creatures."

In the words of Sri S.K. Mahapatro (Bhima Bhoi, P/35) "The bhajans are unsophisticated, unvarnished and simple in structure and language and yet they breathe an air of great passion, intense emotional and holy spirit. Some times they excel in the quality of image building. The bhajana heading "Kehu dekhicha Ki beni netrare". is translated into English by him is reproduced below -

"Have any of you seen him ?
In his old age, dressed as a mendicant, the Master
He passed this way.
He born without parents
Without sucking his mother's breast
He took her milk

I had fondled him in my lap as a little child.
Not that he has grown in age
Only his rediance has now grown brighter
He is neither fair nor dark
I fed him on nothing and he never went out of his house.
I did not give him a name
Nor asked the astrologers to make his horoscope
He played on the dusty streets.
He is without form and complexion
And yet glows with a brilliant radiance.
He is without limbs and yet he moves.
He wears a loin - cloth made of tree - barkls.
The earth and the sky inform me
That my son was going to be a sage and
That he would redeem us all.
In this dark kaliyuga if ever I could see him
I would press him to my bosom and kiss him
I am looking for him every where
So says Bhima the sinner and devoid of Knowkedge ".

Bhim Bhoi addresses his Guru Mahima Gosain as father, friend, theif, friend, brother, son etc. Here he has addressed him as son.

The Bhajana translated above show this inspired poet's capacity for creating surprising images and metaphors. Through the contrast of conflicting visions, concepts and situation sometimes they build an eeric and poignant poetic land scape.

Describing the poetic land scape, Sri S.K. Mohapatra has given a poetic description as follows:

"A landscape where strange flowers blossom and fall unto dust; of exotic bees of the spirit who seek the rasa of realisation; of the silent music of the spheres; of a spring when the tree flowers but has no shade; of flowers that have four colours but there is only poision in them; of He who is without limbs and yet moves; the one who is born without parents, has not sucked his mother's breast, yet has

thriven on her milk. It creates a land scape where rivers swell and surge, meteors shoot down to the earth; a landscape of a sea without water; of a ground that is firm but shakes with strange foot falls; of a land where everyone is dressed like a king, none, however, wears any fabric; of a dance to the music that is inaudible" etc.

Dr. Mayadhar Mansingh has called him (Bhima Bhoi) the poet laureate of the Alekh cult. That he is and it is his passionate liyrics embodying the fundamental essence of Mahima or Alekh cult which won over millions to this cult. But he is more than a poet of a religious cult. He is a lyricist par excellence and his sense of music is unexcelled.

There have been discs of his bhajans to which some of the finest voices of modern Oriya music have lent their voice.

Nirbeda Sadhana

"Nirbeda Sadhana" means "contemplation beyond Vedas". The other meaning is "sadhana beyond vedas". It contains twenty chapters and presented in the form of a dialogue in poetry between Govinda baba and Anadi (Abadhuta).

This is presumebly the first composition of Bhima Bhoi after he was initiated by Mahima Gosain and was written while Bhima Bhoi was staying in the village "Kankana Pada" in the ex-state of Rairakhol. It gives the detailed story of initiation of Govinda baba and also Bhima Bhoi to Alekh cult.

Govinda Baba is belived to be the incarnation of Lord Jagannath by the followers of Mahima Cult. It is also revealed by Anadi, i.e., Mahia Gosain in third Chapter of `Nirbeda Sadhana' that Balasingha Ashrama of Baudh was the "Siddhashrama" of Anadi.

"Nirbeda Sadhana" is an important piece on Mahima cult. The essence of Mahima cult is brought out through the dialogue between Anadi i.e., Mahima Gosain the founder of Mahima Cult and his first disciple Govinda Baba.

Mahima Gosain has explained to Govinda Baba the essentials of the religious path of Mahima cult and has removed his doubts and difficulties " Anadi Brahma" explains to Gonvinda Baba that at first there was void. Out of the void was born `Om'. From `Om' were bron word, form. light, water, world and the sun. It says, "Param Brahma" created the void, the Nirakara and the Adishakti.

Anadi Brahma further explains to Govinda Baba that not merely the Trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Maheswar but also the thirty three crore gods of Hindus cult are ignored by Mahima Dharma.

It also explains why the eight lakh yoginis, the nine crore kantayinis, the stars, the planets and why the sanctified objects like nirmalya, ritual worship, Tulasi etc are also abolished. It is Nirakare who looks after the Universe at the behest of Anadi or the supreme.

Beyond Nirakara and the void is "Mahanitya" or the Eternal Present which is the abode of Anadi on the Supreme.

It is explained that, Veda deals upto the void or the Mahashunya.It says nothing about the Mahanitya. Mahanitya being the abode of Anadi or Supreme, it ought to be the contemplation of all. That is why Mahima cult is described as "Nirbeda Sadhana".

What is sought to be established in "Nimbeda Sadhana" is, the complete surrender at the feet of the lord Alekha. Through it alone the undivided being can attain salvation. Gods and rituals can not help the attainment of such salvation.

The baseless story

The baseless story created by the followers of Mahima cult to show that Bhima Bhoi was blind and even a blind Kandha boy could compose and dictate all the wonderful verses by the grace of his Guru, Mahima Gosain is stated as follows.

"Once Mahima Gosain and his disciple siddha Govinda Baba came to Bhima's village at mid night and called him out. Bhima was surprised and wanted to know who they were. He was told that because of the good deeds of his previous birth both of them had come to him.

Bhima said, "If you have come to bless me, let me be able to see you. "And then he could see by the blessing of Mahima Gosain.

He came out and saw the two seers standing outside the house like "Sun and Moon."

Mahima Gosain blessed him and said that he had a pre-ordained role to play in the propagation of the tenets of Mahima Cult in the present century. Mahima Gosain blessed him to have intense power of poetic vision.

Bhima prayed to him, "Oh Lord, with the power of vision you gave me I have seen your divine feet, but I do not want to see all the dirt in this world. Bless me that the outside world remains invisible to me."

The Lord blessed him saying, "Let your inner eyes open and the external eyes close as before."

Bhima Bhoi again went blind."

This is recounted by Biswanath Baba in his `Satya Mahima Dharma Itihas'.

The true fact

Bhim Bhoi has referred to this incident in the first chapter of `Nirbeda Sadhana' as follows -

Once Mahima Gosain and siddha Govinda baba came to the cottage of Bhima Bhoi in the midnight and called him.

Bhim says, "I woke up immediately and found by my side "Shunya Brahma". When I wiped my eyes and looked again, there they were, the Guru and the disciple. I fell prostrate at their feet and they blessed me."

Nothing has been told about Bhim's blindness in "Nirbeda Sadhana". The true fact is that, Bhima Bhoi was never blind. The followers of Mahima Dharma have intentionally made him blind.

The major part of "Nirbeda Sadhana" deals with exposition of the religion and the way of practising the precepts. The new religious order based on ethical discipline envisaged by Mahima Gosain is

clarified by Bhima Bhoi in his "Nirbeda Sadhana". The Mahima cult is against the existing Hindu caste system but prescribes a new caste order determined by moral and ethical discipline. The people are divided into 6 classes, viz, Raja, Deva, Vedanta, Gopya, Muni and brahma.

Those who aspire wealth and lead luxurious life come under "Raja Group."

Persons inclined to dance, music and other fine arts form the "Deva class".

"The Vedantis" remain confined to sacred texts and religious discussions.

"The Gopyas" violate the rules when necessary and do not show much inclination to religious observances.

Those who strictly adhere to the percepts of Guru come under the "Muni" class.

"The Brahma" class of people concentrate their minds on Mahasunya and utter the name of "Arupa Brahma" at sun rise and sunset. They consider every thing in the universe equal. This last group is considered to be the best of all.

Adi Anta Gita

"Adi Anta Gita" means "Gita of the two ends". Ths is in the form of a dialogue between Gita (Jubati) and "Parama" or "Prakruti" and "Purusha". It contains twelve chapters and presumebly written by Bhim Bhoi during the first phase of his life while he was in Rairakhol ex-state.

"AdiAnta Gita" is almost a technical treatise where the secrets of the body have been sought to be explained in metaphisical terms. Briefly it says that the human being is the representative of the Universe and all are located in the body carrying out their various functions.

This composition purports to give the psychological interpretation or spiritual import of the Veda, shastra, Purana etc. Even the stories including Ramayana and Mahabharata are given their

Psychological interpretations and explaned in terms of human body and mind, conduct and action of male and female, their virtues and vices interacting.

The essential features of a devoted wife have also been described in `Adi Anta Gita' and the coming together of man and woman in sex-union has been sought to be explained in metaphysical terms.

The essence of sexual activity and the relationship between man and woman are presented as parallel to what happens to the sole, the individual being in its quest for supreme deliverance by surrendering itself to the lord.

Like Sarala Das of Oriya Mahabharat fame, who credited all his creativity and inspiration to goddess Sarala, Bhima Bhoi attributed his writings to his Guru Mahima Gosain'a inspiration and not to his own talent. In 8th chapter of his composition "Adi Anta Gita he says-

"I was illiterate from my birth
At the age of sixteen I composed poems.
I know nothing about veda, scriptures etc.
My Guru prompts me from my heart
My guru gives me the knowledge
And I compose the stanzas
Without Guru's prompting and command
I know nothing. "

Again he says -

"My poetical powers are due to Shri Guru
I am an youth without any intelligence
I have composed my Guru's command
By myselt, I am incapable to say anything"

Such was the devotion of Bhima Bhoi to his Guru Mahima Gosain.

Shruti Nisedha Gita

"Shruti Nisedha Gita" means "Vedic ideas which should not be accepted. " This composition records all protests and reactions against many religious and social ideas and practices in vogue during Bhima Bhoi's time.

"Shruti Nisedha Gita" is comparatively a small composition of Bhima Bhoi contaning only seven chapters (Adhyaya). This composition is at the same level and in the same line as "Nirbeda Sadhana" of the same poet. In reply to Govinda baba's questions, Anadi Brahma has explained the activities which are prescribed by under Mahima Dharma.

Bhima Bhoi, and for that Mahima cult is against idol worship. He has attributed the creation of the universe, the world and all things worldly to "Nirakar" or the formless God at the behest of the Param Brahma or the Supreme.

Nirakara is described as a purple patch of Jyoti or Light without any shape or form. He is attributed to have created Brahma, Bishnu, Maheswar and the pantheon of Hindu Gods to advance the cause of the creation. In course of time, they are depicted to have exhibited several inadequacies in their conduct and gone out of importance being dealt with by the supreme.

Brahma, Bishnu, Maheswar, Rama, Krishna, Jagannath, Parvati and like that the 33 crores of Gods and Goddesses are described of inadequacies, deficiencies, narrowness and limitations etc. and are not to be worshipped as the Supreme. They are, however, all located in the body of a human being helping him to reach the Supreme.

"The thirty three crores of Gods, have all their abode in the body."

"No need to contemplate Gods and Goddesses, Achieve the Supreme by niskama meditation.

"No need to worship idols, this body is from the bodyless."

"Meditate on the bodyless and acquire the knowledge of Brahma, the formless."

"Jagannath is in your body
Why do you worship the image ?
The idol is only dry wood
How can it take you to Baikuntha ?"
"Form is tainted with sin,
And is enemy of imagination
They fail to realise Brahma in themselves,
And foolishly wander about in the externalities"

(Translation by H.H. Patel)

Bhima Bhoi has described limitations to the veda and speaks about Nirveda or contemplation beyond veda. He has severely criticised the Brahmins of faulty understanding of Veda and accused them of misdoings in the name of Veda.

He has severely condemned Japa with Tulsi Kanthi, Dashami & Ekadashi fastings and festivities etc in their external observation and gives out the psychological meaning or spiritual import of those acts. He says - "Real kanthi is the" Jyoti Nama Brahma", Persue religion and meditate on it."

"Ekadashi is actually the Ek-Akshyar or the one Realise this."
Do not discriminate. Have no hesitation (Bikar)
This is the Dharma of Nirbeda."
Regarding "Nirmalya Sevana" he says -
"They do not understand what is Nirmalya -

Nirmalya is actually pure Knowledge and it makes one e devotee of the Nirguna."

Thus the composition is full of criticism and pointed attack on popular practices of religious prescription in vogue without proper understanding.

What is sought to be established in `Shruti Nisedha Gita' is the complete surrender at the feet of the Lord Alekha. Through it alone, the undivided being can attain salvation. Gods and rituals can not help the attainment of such salvation.

Astake Bihari Gita

Four of the Gita's of Bhima Bhoi namely Shruti Nishedh Gita, AdiAnta Gita, Astaka Bihari Gita and Brahma Nirupan Gita contain the thelogical teaching of Mahima cult.

"Astaka Bihari Gita" contains six chapters. In this Gita, Bhima Bhoi has given a call to all humanity and particularly the disciples to lead a pure, austere life and to put their mind and heart completely under divine dispensation. He has been anquished at the realisation of the evils and injustices which abound in Kali Yuga.

"Astak Bihari Gita" contains a series of steps which are prescribed to get over this decline both for social regeneration and individual deliverance. "Astaka Bihari Gita" proposes the essences of "gyana" and "Bhakti Yoga" in simple terms. In his words -

There is a boat man at the ghat, the river crossing,

He would cross over your soul. This body is like a dense forest.

Remember the Lord. He remains within you,

permeating your entire physical body."

Brahma Nirupana Gita

In `Brahma Nirupana Gita' Bhima Bhoi attempts to define the nature and qualities of Brahman in 4th canto.

He was aware that the Vedas and Vedantas can never define the Brahman. This has been mentioned by him more than once in his writings. He was also aware that the shastras and learned discourses fail to get into the awareness of the Brahman, because he remains beyond the scope of reason and Knowledge.

Brahman is attainable only through an intense craving like the craving of the child for the mother.

He is ever graceful and merciful and is prepared to excuse all sins if we seek HIs blessings and grace wholeheartedly and give up all ego.

He says that the 33 crore gods, innumerable Yogins, rishis, gandharbas and Kinnaras could not know his power and his

manifestations. The stars, the planets could not comprehend him either. The cycle of seasons, the four dhamas could not incorporate the mystery of his being.

Bhima Bhoi has made a reference to the sound of His Veena, the veena of the Divine. The soundless sound of his veena can be listened only through `dhyana yoga'. The road leads on to that void where there is eternal spring, where hunger and thirst do not affect the soul. It is this road which he constantly keeps in his mind and wanted to achive, the true vision of the ultimate reality.

Chautisha Madhu Chakra

"Chautisha Madhu Chakra" means "Bee hive of Chautisha". It is a collection of Chautishas written by Bhima Bhoi.

Chautisha is a celebrated poetic form in Oriya Literature. It is called `chautisha', because each composition in it consists of 34 stanzas. In the normal Chautisha-form, the stanzas are arranged in such a way that the first word of each line begins with a letter as per the alphabetic order of letters in Oriya. Bhima Bhoi has not only composed Chautisha in serial of the Letters in the alphabet, but also in the reverse order.

Besides in each line he has sought to use a number of words beginning with the letters used as the first letter of the first word.

These Chautisas are generally composed in plain and simple language and are often couched in `Nabakhyari' Chhanda (Chhanda consisting nine letters).

The contents of the Chautishas are more or less as in "Stuti Chintamani". The concepts of Mahima Dharma, the end of Kali Yuga and the need for divine grace to bring about salvation of individual soul and social regeneration have been explained in this.

But the literary qualities in the compositions are more outstanding than the religious or philosophical content. Presumebly he was making efforts to make religious and philosophical matters saturated with literary qualities freely in these compositions.

Prachi Samitee founded by Late Professor Arta Ballav Mohanty

published two most important works of Bhima Bhoi namely (1) Stuti Chintamani (1931) and Chautisha Madhu Chakra (1948).

Referring to `Chautisha Madhu Chaktra' Dr. N.K. Sahoo has written as follows -

"His chautisha""Madhu Chakra" consisting of 23 devotional lyrics expresses all the idealism, dreams and aspirations of his great mind and at the same time faithfully analyses the philosophical and mystical thoughts of the Mahima cult.

The first seven chautishas reveal his emotional complain against the enemical attitude of the feudal chiefs and the Brahmins towards Mahima religion. His eagarness for the recovery of the prestine glory of the faith is also aptly suggested by them.

The eighth Chautisha is a long devotional prayer to Mahima Gosain asking him to restore the true religion, to rescue the pious and the devotee and at the same time to show mercy to the sinners.

In the 9th & the 10th we read the dialogue between the poet and Alekh Swami and through that he exposes the morbid cynicism and fanaticism of his age. Subsequently Alekh Swami assures him that he would rescue the distressed world and save the afflicted devotees.

From the 11th to the 19th Chautisha Bhima Bhoi expresses his deep sympathy for the suffering human race, and appeals, to all to dedicate themselves unconditionally to the great "Dweller of the void," who is characterised as Mahima Gosain. Kalki purusha, Alekh, Niranjan and the enlightened Buddha. In these chautishas the poet expounds the philosophy of Jiva and Parama - the fervent attempt of the former to meet and be one with the latter. He further explains here the ideologies of the Ulta Kadamba tree, the Satchakra, Trikuta, Vankunala, Golahata, Kuanri Patna, Amana Mandala etc.

The last four chautishas once again depict the sinful and immoral practices of the age and the poet here warns the people to get prepared for the last judgement of Mahima swami in a heavenly assembly attended by all the Gods, Siddhas and devotees. The chautishas assert that Mahima Gosain was the embodiment of the great sunya Brahma and that Joranda is the visible manifastation of

the void region. The poet asks the people not to disregard the Guru, the yogis and the sanyasis of the Mahima faith, nor also to disrespect the scriptures and the Gitas, and to relinquish such low practices as Varnasrama Dharma, the idol worship and the like."

The exceptional chautishas

The Chautishas heading "Kisa Mu Kahibi tote" and "Karuna Sagara Hari Kambu Chakrapani" are treated as exceptional Chautishas as these are completely different from other Chautishas composed by Bhima Bhoi. They deal with a theme not in any way connected with the Mahima cult.

The love play between Radha and Krishna of Hindu mythology has been described in these two pieces. These are written in local `Jaiphula' and `Rasarkeli' Chhandas. They have a racy folk idiom and contain uninhibited description of physical enjoyment. Radha's craving for Krishna is delineated through intense desire for union with all its intimate details in these two poems.

Hence it is presumed that these two Chautishas were composed by Bhima Bhoi before his convension to Mahima cult.

At places they purport to be dialogue between Radha & Krishna. The description is so absorbing that in one piece of the composition the poet has forgotten the limit of 34 stanzas set upon by himself.

The followers of Mahima cult declare that these two pieces are not meant for mahima cult and were composed for other's entertainment. In these two compositions all inhibitions are gone. They give unfettered expression to the poetic talent and feelings of the poet.

Might be, in some gay mood or at a moment of laxity the poet gave vent to the poetic exuberance bubbling within him for the purpose of being sung on gay occasions. In fact, these two pieces are widely sung during marriage time by local drummers attended with drum beating and dance.

The songs give an indication as to what Bhima Bhoi would have been without the imposed task of preaching Mahima cult. Most probably his poetic genius would have taken a different direction. He

would have produced erotic, sensuous poetry of devastating influence in the tradition of Kabi Samrat Upendra Bhanja which would have shocked or surprised the world. Whether that would have perfected his genious more or spoiled it, is a question which can not be answered for certain.

It short, Bhima Bhoi's poetic excells others of his age. The form and style of his poetry has its own beauty. It has a dazzling fluidity, rippling flow of a river, reflecting glimmering radiance and brightness of the sun, moon & stars.

The intensity of feeling is interspersed with the flow of expression. The tone with the maturity of poet lends to the intensity and makes it impressive.

Bhima Bhoi is a bright example of ineffable poetic genius. His contribution towards the enrichment of Mahima philosophy is noteworthy and excels other poet prophets of this land.

Bangala Atha Bhajan

"Bangala Atha Bhajana" contains eight bhajans composed in Bengali mixed with Oriya language by Bhima Bhoi.

It is presumed that, among his followers, there were Bangalis in Orissa and it is possible either by himself or with the help of fellow bhaktas Bhima Bhoi composed these songs.

"PADMAKHALPA", "BRAHMA CHALAKA" AND "MANU SABHA MANDALA".

`Padmakalpa' and `Brahma Chalaka' have been included in `Bhima Bhoi Granthabali' of 1971 edition. The collected works of Bhima Bhoi was compiled by Sri Bira Kishor Das and published by J. Mohapatra and Co. Cuttack,"Manu Sabha Mandala" has since been published by one Bhubaneswar publisher.

A comparison of Bhima Bhoi's other eight works with these three shows noticeable difference in style and approach. These three works lack the colloquial and rich folk idiom, the glowing lyricism and simple passion of Bhima's other works.

Mahima Vinoda

Mahima Vinod of Bhima Bhoi is yet to be published. It is gathered from the Khaliapali Ashram that one professor took away the manuscript for his research - work and never returned to the Ashrama.

Dr. P.M. Nayak in his article "Saurava : Eka Aranya Prasunara" says that, "Mahima Vinoda" has four parts and is written in mixed Oriya & Bengali language. In first part cosmology, in 2nd part appearance of Mahima Gosain, in third part description of Kapilas hills and initiation of Govinda Baba, in 4th part Mahima festival at Malbiharpur, last days of Mahima Gosain etc. have been described.



APPENDIX

Utkal Dipika dated 13.3.1881

Utkal Dipika, a contemporary news paper, had the following to say in its edition Dt. 13.3.1881, part 16, No. II.

"For the last two weeks, there is a rumour going round that at puri some nomadic persons resembling the local kelas (snake charmers) forcibly entered the Jagannath Temple carrying cooked rice in pots.

At that time the lord's bhoga was being carried into the main temple and therefore the guards tried to prevent them. This led to a scuffle betwen the guards and these intruders in which one of the latter dided on the spot and the others threw the cooked rice they carried inside the temple precints and thereby despoiled the lords's bhoga. They also threatened the priests that they would burn down the lord (His wooden image) and swear their bodies with its ash. There after they left.

Thus a series of offences punishable under criminal law seems to have taken place in a brief interval of time but there is yet no official news of either any arrests having been made on any criminal action against the wrong-doers. Nor is there any rumor regarding such action. But it would be a matter of serious concern if there is any truth in these rumours."

Attack on the Temple of Jagannath in Puri by fanatics.

In official records one important event has been recorded regarding an attack on the Jagannath Temple by some of the so-called followers of the Mahima cult.

It happened in the 19th century when the Mahima cult was spreading throughout Orissa even though there was a powerful force to counteract it, especially the orthodox Hindus and christian missionaries.

An extract from the work of Mr. C.E. Buckland, Bengal under the liutenant Governors - Vol II - PP733 - 735 Under the heading "Attack on the temple of Jagannath in Puri by fanatics" is quoted below.

"Intimation was received by the commissioner of Orissa on the 9th March 1881 that a party of fanatics, consisting of 12 men and 3 women had entered the temple of Jagannath in Puri on the 1st diem, with the object of burning the idol of Jagannath and that a disturbance had taken place, in which one of the fanatics has lost his life.

The party in question were residents of Sambalpur in the Central province, and they stated that they were induced to come to puri in consequence of one of their "Guru", an invisible being without shape or form, to bring the images of Jaganath, Balaram & Subhadra out of the tempe and to burn them on the road.

For the purpose of carrying this order into effect, a large body of men and women left their homes in Sambalpur, taking their children with them, but when within a few miles of Puri, 12 men and 3 women separated themselves from the main body and precaded them to the temple.

The disturbances formed the subject of an immediate investigation by the local authorities, from which the following facts were collected.

"One of the door keepers of the temple, who was on duty at the Lion gate when the disturbance occured, in describing the scene, stated that about 12 men and 3 women who were almost in a state of nudity, came up to the temple shouting `Alekha' `Alekha'. They had with them an earthen pot containing cooked rice of which, judging from the state of their hands, they had evidently only recently partaken.

The door keeper tried to prevent them from entering the temple by closing the gate, but they succeeded in pushing it open and forcing their way into the building accompanied by some 200 pilgrims. One of the fanatics still held in his hand the pot of rice, but on being remonstrated with by the door-keeper, he consented to leave it outside and was then permitted to enter.

The party next proceeded to break down the door of the Bhogamandap, the apartment in which the offerings of the worshippers of the idols are usually displayed, but which was at the time empty. They then made their way into the great hall of the temple infront of the shrines, the crowd of spectators having by this time doubled.

Finding the door called Jai Bijai shut, the fanatics went out into the enclosure and rushed about like made man and women, endeavouring to find an entrance in some other direction.

The crowd of pilgrims at this time was estimated to number upwards of 1000, and a great deal of pushing and struggling took place, in the midst of which one of the fanatics fell or was pushed on to the stone pavement. He was lifted up by some of his companions and was assisted out of the temples and shortly after expired.

The rioters were arrested by the police and were placed on their trial on charges framed under section 147 and 297 of the penal code before the Deputy magistrate of Puri, and on conviction were each sentenced to 3 months imprisonment.

Shortly after the arrest of the party of fanatics above referred to, the Assistant Superintedent of Police learnt that a second party were on their road to Puri, with a similar object in view, and he accordingly sent out a patrol and caused them to be arrested before they could enter the town and do any mischief.

This second party consisted of 6 men, eleven women, eleven small children. The adults were placed on their trial as persons having no ostensible means of subsistence, but they were acquitted by the Deputy Magistrate on the grounds that they were in the same position as hundreds of other beggers, and that there was nothing in their case to raise a suspicion that they earned their livlihood by improper means.

The rioters being inhabitants of Sambalpur, the Chief Commissioner of the Central provinces was asked to favour the lieutenant Governor with information regarding their place of residence, habits and pursuits. In compliance with this request, the Chief Commissioner furnished the following particulars.

"There is a peculiar sect of Hindu dissenters in the Sambalpur district known as Kumbhupatias. The word Kumbhupatia is derived from `Kumbhu', the name of a kind of tree and 'pat', the bark of a tree, and the sect is so called because its followers make ropes from the bark of the tree and wear them round waists. The religion is also known as that of `Alekh' and its followers claim revelation as its foundation.

Alekh swamy, the God incarnate used, it is said, to reside in the Himalayas, but about the year, 1864 he came to Malbaharpur in Banki, Zilla Cuttack and revealed the religion professed by the Kumbhupatias to 64 persons, the principal of whom was Govinda Das, and it is chiefly owing to the exertions of these disciples that the religion was propagated.

Alekh Swamy (which signifies the lord whose attributes can not be described in writing) removed to Dhenkanal, a feudatory state, where, for 3 years immediately preceding his death, he led the life of a medicant and wanderer.

Although the religion originated in Cuttack, it spread more rapidly in the district of Sambalpur, and men of all classes and castes, except the Uriya Brahmins are freely embracing it.

It is not so much the peculiarity of the rules of any particular caste or sect that tends to increase the number of converts to it as the position in life of the converts themselves: Thus in Binda the people of a whole village embraced the Kumbhupatia religion, because the Gaontia had done so. The name of some 30 villages are given as those in which the kumbhupatias chiefly reside."

A full account of their sects, tenets and habits was added . (This neews was published in the Utkal Dipika Vol XVI Dt. 16.3.1881)

The incident occured on the 1st March 1881. At that time Bhima Bhoi had established his Ashrama at Khaliapali in the ex-state of Sonepur. He did not take part in the said attack on the temple of Jagannath in Puri by fanatics.

According to B.C. Mazumdar, the historian, the Kumbhipatias derived their inspiration for the attack on the temple of Jagannath from Bhima Bhoi. A few other less important writers and critics also

have stated that the attack was made at the instance of Bhima Bhoi. Mohapatra Nilamani Sahu of Orissa went a few steps forward by saying that Bhima Bhoi himself went to Puri to attack the Temple of Lord Jagannath in an article published in Oriya monthly magazine 'Vijaya' edited by Shri Abhaya Singh from Madras (now (1997) the Magazine is published in Orissa and is edited by some other Editor). The allegation, however, is not supported by any official records. Mr. C.E. Buckland makes no reference to Bhima Bhoi in his 'Bengal under the lieutenant Governors'.

There is no reference whatsoever in Bhima Bhoi's own writings to this incident.

It is extremely unlikely that the preacher of truth, tolerance and non-violence could have guided or have even been responsible for such an evil incident.

The Archaeological Survey of Mayurbhanja

Vol I by Nagendranath Vasu

The revival of Buddhism (CC X IV)

BHIMA BHOI ARAKHITA DAS

We are conscious that before proceeding further, our first and foremost duty is to give here a brief account of BHIMA BHOI, who is not only the leader but is almost the propagator of this renaseence. We find the following autobiographical sketch in his own Kali Bhagavata.

Born blind, Bhima Bhoi came of the low Kandha family and first saw the light of the day in the village of Juranda in the Dhenkanal state. His full name was Bhima Sena Bhoi Araksitadasa.

He managed to earn his livelihood by husking the corn and doing other menial works for his neighbours, but he always uttered the name of the Lord, and had his mind concentrated upon His thought. And thus were passed about the first twenty-five years of his life.

At length, tired of the heaviness of his life, and extremely grieved that the Lord had not yet taken pity upon his wretchedness, he determined to put an end to his life. With this end in view, he set out from his cottage and in the course of his wanderings dropped down in to a well. Here he passed three days and three nights.

Hearing of this, the villagers flocked to the scene of occurrence and tried to pursuade him by all the means in their power to give up the determination of sacrificing his life; but he turned a deaf ear to all their entreaties.

At length, the lord took pity upon him and at the end of the third night He assumed his own form and standing upon the brink of the well addressed Bhima Bhoi in an affectionate tone.

The latter told him of the griefs that were gnawing at his heart; where upon the lord asked him to look up and behold Him.

And when in obedience to this, he twened his eyes up, the born blind saw above his head, in flesh and blood, the object of his loving adoration standing in all His glory ! His whole heart was over flowing with veneration.

The Lord extended His hand towards him; he seized it firmly and in the twinkling of an eye he found himself standing side by side with his god.

The lord said, you have obtained this interview by virtue of your prayers to me. Now I ask you to go obroad and to publish and spread my favourite religion `Alekh Dharma'. He then gave him a long flouring garment called `Kaupina' and a belt with the following instruction. `You are to accept only alms of boiled rice for yourself. Take care that you never ask for or accept rice or anything else. And thus keeping together your body and soul with the boiled rice that you will get, you are to propagate the Mahima Dharma.

x x x

CCXLVIII - Bhima Bhoi then married in compliance with the wishes of his preceptor and attended to all the house hold duties of man; but the underlying principle of his life was the propagation of his religion. To effect this, he wrote several poetical works.......For long the fame oif Bhima Bhoi spread far and wide.

Hearing his immortal instruction helping in the attainment of real knowledge and illumining the head and the heart, the mighty pillars of the caste system forgot themselves and stopped at his feet, though the blood of the low kanda ran in his veins. They considered him to be a spark from the eternal flame of truth and knowledge and flocked around him like flies around burning lamp : And then, before several years had elapsed, the Mahima Dharma could count its followers by thousands.

SONPUR IN THE SAMBALPUR TRACT (-Page -126-)

by. B.C. Mazumdar

APPENDIX - IV

ALEKHISM

(A new religious in Sonpur)

On the basis of old Jainism, which prevailed in the forest regions of Orissa, one Mahima Gosai organised a religious sect called the Kumbhipatias in the Tributary State of Dhenkanal in Orissa. I refer the readers for a short account of these Kumbhipatias to the District Gazetter of Sambalpur by L.S.S.O' Malley. My remarks regarding this sect will also be found at pages 59-60 of this Gazetteer.

The religious system of the Kumbhipatias received a new life when Bhima Bhoi became a preacher of this system. As Bhima Bhoi (an illiterate non-Aryan Kandha preacher of a new faith) has established a sect having no faith either in caste or idolatry, a short account of his life and teachings is given in this Appendix.

Bhima Bhoi was born blind in a poor Kandha family in the Feudatory State of Rehrakhol not earlier than 1855, for he died in 1895 when he was (as the report is) on the sunny side of forty. Kandha or Kondh is the name of a wild aboriginal tribe of the hilly tracts of Orissa and Ganjam. A large number of them has now settled in Oriya villages, speaks the Oriya language and follows the occupation of common cultivators or field labourers. Bhima Bhoi

belonged to such an Oriya Kandha family. In his childhood he was employed in the house of a rich cultivator, and his principal business was to tend cattle. He was exceptionally intelligent and singularly receptive of ideas. In many Oriya villages a cottage is set apart by the villagers where some religious books are kept and where in the evening one reads aloud some pasages of the Oriya metrical translation of the famous Bhagabata Purana to the villagers who care to assemble there. This cottage is called the `Bhagabata-ghara.' Bhima Bhoi being a Kandha by caste was not allowed to sit in the hall, but he regularly attended the evening meetings and committed to memory every syallable that was uttered. He chanted them while in the fields, and thoughtfully considered the spiritual importance of the passages. He was spiritually minded; and when a boy of twelve got interested in the doctrines of the Kumbhipatias. He must have learnt something of them from some mendicant who came to the village. When a boy of sixteen, he went to the Feudatory State of Dhenkanal which was at the time the principal home of the Alekh religion. The leader (called Guru or Mahima Gosai) to whom Bhima Bhoi went at Dhenkanal died towards the end of 1875. He then left Dhenkanal and after having preached his fairth for some time collected a good number of followers and settled with them in the State of Sonpur in 1877. The fact that he was a man of great mental powers and could compose songs in chaste Oriya language, though blind and illiterate, lent great charm to his personality.

That he had a charming and commanding personality can be fully appreciated from a fact which is on Government records. Bhim Bhoi considered the celebrated idol of Jagannath at Puri in Orissa a huge nuisance, and burn the idol. Those who went to Puri to execute the order of their Guru were mostly men of the district of Sambalpur. The man who died in a scuffle with the protectors of the Puri temple was a resident of the taluk Chandrapur which was in the district of Sambalpur till the 16th of October, 1905. Hari Panda and some other Brahmans of Sambalpur openly embraced the religion by throwing away their Brahmanical threads. Hari Panda and his brother Basudeva being men of some education wrote to dictation the inspired utterances of Bhima Bhoi. The disciples fully believed them to be inspired, as their Guru, who was an illiterate blind man, spoke in

easy, flowing and faultless Oriya verses what he dictated. Another fact need be mentioned to illustrate the influence of Bhima Bhoi. We can count at least 30 villages in the district of Sambalpur alone, where the Kumbhipatias chiefly reside. The official remark of the Chief Commissioner of the Central Provinces that "men of all classes and castes except the Oriya Brahmans are freely embracing the religions," is mainly correct; for only a few Brahmans have openly become Kumbhipatias. What appeals so directly to the people of this unadvanced tract that they embrace this religion by a contemptous rejection of the old, time-honoured faith, will be found in the tenets themselves.

The meaning of the names which this sect bears need be first discussed. Regarding the origin of their religion the Kumbhipatias narrate that in the very remote past many saints of angelic character, who never cared to cover their nakedness with even a rag or bark of a tree, came to the hilly tracts of Orissa being merciful to the sinners who lived like beasts. They tended the sick and the distressed in their mahima. The word mahima does not indicate in popular Oriya "glory" merely; it also connotes the idea of seva or service with altruistic feelings. This explanation is necessary to understand properly what is meant by mahima-dharma, which is another name for Alekhism. The facts that the Kumbhipatias wear now the yellow garb of the Jainas and the Buddhists, and do not, like the Jainas take any meal after sunset, lead me to suppose that the nude sages of the tradition were the Digambara Jainas from whom the origin of the religion is traced. The Jainas, who must be given the credit for having done a good deal in old times in softening the heart of India by residing with many forest tribes, once moved about in large numbers in the hilly and forest tracts of Chutia Nagpur and Orissa, as is well known to all. Besides what Mr. O' Malley has recorded in the District Gazetter of Singhbhum in respect of the ancient ruins of the Jaina temples, there are many others throughout this tract.

There is another proof of the fact that Alekhism has come in connection with the Buddhistic faith. Bhima Bhoi himself called his Guru (the Mahima Swami of Dhenkanal) a new and mighty Buddha avatar. When Hari Panda and his brother Basu Panda met Bhim Bhoi at Gulunda in Sonepur State and became inclined to accept the

new faith, Bhima Bhoi asked the two brothers to go to Dhenkanal to see the great Buddha Swami and be blessed thereby. This incident happened long before Bhima Bhoi became a leader himself and when Mahima Swami was alive at Dhenkanal.

Once a Mahima Guru of very olden times, so goes the tradition, appeared before the naked disciples who fell prostrate before him to do him honour. The Guru then asked them in the verse - " Uthare tumbhe jhata, pindhare kumbhi-pata". The meaning of it is-Rise ye soon and wear the bark of Kumbhi tree. All inspired utterances command respect when they are in verse. The Pali Khuddaha Nikaya may be cited as instances of such utterances in verse. It is for this fact that the men of the Alekh faith commenced to wear the barks of trees and got the popular name Kumbhipatias. But the Mahima Swami who was the spiritual leader of Bhima Bhoi asked his 64 principal disciples, for reasons knwon to him, that they were at liberty to wear ordinary clothes instead of the bark of the Kumbhi tree. The first line of the verse which he uttered is reported to be - " Pata Chadi pata pindha". The world "pata" means silk cloth in Oriya, but it was used here for an effect in the verse in contrast with the word "pata" to signify cloth generally. After the death of Mahima Swami, the disciples of Bhima Bhoi and Govinda Das took to ordinary dress (dyed in yellow), but the followers of other leaders struck to the old costume. Some of these men, for example the followers of Narasing Das, wear the ordinary, yellow robe, but wear a girdle made of Kumbhi bark round their waist. The report of the Commissioner of the Orissa Division is admitted to be correct by the Kumbhipatias that the great Mahima Swami of Dhenkanal devoted himself to the work of seva and took "special care of the sick people who resorted to kapilas for the benefit of their health and very generally succeeded in getting it restored." He was literally a Mahima Gosai.

The ruling moral idea which is at the basis of the system of Alekhism is a noble one. The teachers of Alekhism seek to impress it upon the minds of the disciples that men become sinful principally because of want of inhibition in the matter of sexual desire. The whole system of Alekhism is concerned with the regulation of the conduct of man with reference to his sexualinstincts. So far so good.

But the means which is prescribed to save man from his shipwreck on conduct is rather cruel. Before describing the means resorted to by the Kumbhipatias to maintain purity of character one more doctrinal notion need be stated. Faith in the transmigration of an immortal soul is universal in India and the Kumbhipatias also believe in it. They believe, as in the olden times the Hindus did, that the very soul of the father is born in the shape of the son-Atmabai jayate puttrah. It was certainly difficult in an unscientific age to get a Mark Baldwin to detect what modifying influence from birth in the shape of imitation makes the child imitate the father even in gestures and other movements of body, and it was next to impossible for the thinkers of the olden times to understand that the child though a chip of the old block is altogether a new and independent creation. I may note in passing that the queer idea of heredity as well the idea of transmigration in some shape or other was prevalent all over the world. Professor I.A. Thomson has very rightly remarked in his work on Heredity that "the idea of successive reincarnations has had many expressions in the West as well as in the East". Connecting the above two ideas together it has been formulated in Alekhim that not only restraint in respect of sexual desire is necessary, but it is also of the greatest moment that one should not be born in the shape of children. It is strongly believed that one who procreates children is not only born in part in the shape of children, but will be required to be born again in entirety. This belief is found amongst the Bauls of Bengal as well.

The Kumbhipatias allow the lay disciples to marry and to procreate children with this injuction that they should only approach their wives when the period favourable for fertilization of ovum arrives. These lay disciples, they say, be-having in the above manner, will be born again with a purer body having no craving for lustful desires and will attain salvation at the next birth. For the specially initiated people it is a condition that exact celebacy should be observed.

Bhima Bhoi as a matter of fact did beget two children - one a son and another a dauther - on two women, who became nuns and lived at Khaliapali in Bhima Bhoi's math. Both these women are still living at Khaliapali with the children begotten upon them. It was

nineteen years ago that first a daughter and then after two months a son were born having Bhim Bhoi for their father. The disciples were no doubt very much shocked at it, but Bhima Bhoi explained it to them that he brought one male and one female child into existence with a view to give to the world one ideal woman and one ideal man. How these two ideal beings are behaving now could not be ascertained by me.

Bhima Bhoi having, in the opinion of some of the Kumbhipatias, transgressed the rules regarding procreation, the Kumbhipatias of Dhenkanal and the disciples of Bhagavan Das and Kripasindshu Das regard the Sonput section as heretics. But the Sonpur section of the Kumbhipatias still continues to be strong having the greatest number of followers.

Many Kumbhipatias do not at all bathe in water. It is not the rule that a bath should be avoided. Some persons do not bathe to report it loudly that the real purity lies in the purity of mind and that the Brahmanic ablutioins are of no avoil. As the Kumbipatias discourage worshipping gods and goddess, they do not eat any food cooked in the houses of orthodox Brahmans, for the Brahmans offer the food first to the tutelary gods. They do not decline to receive pecuniary help from the Hindu Rajas and the Brahmans, though they do not eat any cooked food of theirs. Otherwise the Kumbhipatias do not observe any caste rules and take into their body any man of any caste whatsoever.

In marriage, which is rather the only social ceremony with them, they only ask the bridegroom and bride to lead the ideal life of the Kumbhipatias in the presence of a few men and women belonging to the sect. The Kumbhipatias do not cremate, but bury their dead bodies; for they do not believe in the purity of fire. They raise a tomb over the interred body of the Guru and light a lamp at the tomb every evening to do honour to him.

There are three general festive days among them, namely, the full-moon days in the month of Kartik, Magh and Baisakh, when the Kumbhipatias assemble from all places at the hierrarch's seat and pass some days in social amenities and religious discourse.

As to the secret doctrines of Alekhism, I refer the readers to my paper on the subject in the journal of the Authropological Institute, London.

Later on B.C. Mazumdar said as following in Typical selections from Oriya literature Vol. II. calcutta (1923).

"My report regarding him (Bhima Bhoi), as has been published in the District Gazetteer of Sambalpur, stands in need of correction in one point of importance.

I can assert on the strength of some internal evidence collected from his writings, that he was not born blind, but became blind during the early years of his youth.[1]

Evidently he learnt how to read and write in his Childhood, but acquired knowledge of old time Oriya literature by merely listening to the recitation of the books in Bhagabata Houses of Orissa.

He was exceptionally intelligent and singularly receptive to new ideas; He heard Jagannath Das's Bhagabata and other puranas recited in many Hindu villages, and what he thus heard, he retained in his wonderfully powerful memory.

Once he came in contact with some itimerant Kumbhipatia preachers and got himself interested in this new creed.

He went to Dhenkanal to meet the Guru of the sect and there he became a disciple of the Guru.[2]

Subsequently he modified the tenets of the Kumbhipatias and became himself the Guru of a new form of Alekh religion.

It is a phenomenon of great significance that Bhima Bhoi who was a blind low-caste Kondh became the progenitor of a religious system, which disowns caste system and idolatry.

NOTE

(1) It has been proved that Bhima Bhoi was never blind
(2) He did not go to Dhenkanal to meet his Guru. Guru Mahima Gosain came to his cottage and discipled him.

His principal seat was in the feudatory state of sonepur, where a large number of his followers assembled to hear him preach his doctrines.

Some learned Brahmans became his disciples, renouncing the caste system and these Brahmans were specially employed in writing to dictation what Bhima Bhoi preached in imprompter verses.."

Remarks of B.C. Mazumdar on Bhima Bhoi in the book entitled typical selections from Oriya Literature, 1923.

B.C. Mazumdar had the following to say about Bhima Bhoi's poetry:

"I have selected only a small number of his doctrinal poems but the readers will see that though Bhima Bhoi was not educated in any school, his language is good and his style is elegant.

The first poem in the selections is a cautisa in reverse order; this new form of cautisa shows that Bhima Bhoi displayed his originality even in small matters. Though it is a mystic doctrinal poem, no one will fail to notice how sweet the poem is and how captivating is its style.

It is a pity that his works are all in namuscript (italics mine) and the country which should be proud of him has not as yet appreciated his merit.

In my humble opinion, he is a genius, and for his moral courage and clearness of thought, he is an unique personality in Orissa.





Writer : Bhagirathi Nepak

Shri Bhagirathi Nepak is a prolific writer and has distinguished himself in different literary genera and folk-art. His intensive research on the life and works of the great Oriya Saint Poet Bhima Bhoi of the Mahima Cult has brought authentic information about the life of the poet which was hitherto shrouded in mystery and heresy. He has the following books to his credit.

Oriya : Bhima Bhoinka Balya Kahani Vol.I & II
: Kabikula Chanda Bhima Bhoi
: Kabi Bhima Bhoi O Mahima Dharma Parichaya
: Odia Sahityara Tini Bhima
: Mahima Dharmare Bhima Bhoinka Bhumika
: Bhima Bhoinka Aloukika Kahani
: Amagan Kabi Bhima Bhoi
: Bhima Bhoi Atma Parichiti O Anyanya Prasanga
: Bhima Bhoi O' Janana
: Bhima Bhoi

English : Bhima Bhoi, the Adivasi Poet Philosopher
: Bhima Bhoi, the greatest Advasi Poet prophet
: Bhima Bhoi, His life and works.